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LETTERS
ON
THE MANAGEMENT
OF
HOUNDS.

(*Horlock*)

BY SCRUTATOR.

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TO THE EARL OF DUCIE,

&c. &c.

MY DEAR LORD DUCIE,

In dedicating the following pages to your Lordship, I have not the vanity to suppose that they contain any remarks upon hunting with which you are not already acquainted, or that they can afford any instruction to one who, for so many years, stood at the head of a first-rate establishment, to adorn which your high talents and perfect knowledge of everything pertaining to the "Noble Science," both in the kennel and in the field, were so eminently calculated. From your great experience I have derived many valuable instructions, which, I have no doubt, will occur to you upon perusing this work; for its many imperfections I must claim your indulgence, and that kind consideration for the faults of others for which you have ever been conspicuous. Justly proud of that friendship with which you have honoured me for many years, and with a heartfelt hope that your valuable life may long be spared to add lustre and improvement to that far "nobler science of Agriculture," at the head of which your name now stands confessed by all, as its most experienced and enlightened Patron,

I have the honour to remain,

Dear Lord Ducie,

Most sincerely yours,

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IF it be enquired what necessity there existed for the publication of another book on the subject of Fox-hunting, when the works of Beckford and Mr. Delmé Ratcliffe have already exhausted the subject, and left scarcely the shadow of a chance for any writer, however deeply versed in the knowledge of the Noble Science, to offer anything that could compete with these already fully appreciated authors, I reply, that these Letters were never originally intended to appear beyond the columns of *Bell's Life*; but numerous applications having been made to the Author to publish them in a separate form, this volume appears, thus summoned, before the Public. To meet the often-repeated question, when the publication would commence, the Letters have been hastily and with few alterations submitted to the Press. Perhaps I may be pardoned for making some allusion here to the high though unmerited eulogium which has been passed upon the humble productions of my pen by the highly talented and experienced author of "The Noble Science," to whom my best thanks are due for the compliment he was pleased to pay me, when these Letters first appeared in *Bell's Life*. To fluency of language or

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LETTER I.

"Qui studit optatam cursu contingere metam
Multa tulit, fecitque, puer, sudavit et alsit,
Abstinuit venere et vino."—HORACE.

THE observations I am about to make in the following letters are not intended to provoke the criticism of those who, whether as masters of hounds or huntsmen, may possess equal, if not superior knowledge to myself in all that relates to the management of horses and hounds. I neither invite nor deprecate their censure; my object is to instruct the uninitiated in the mysteries of the *ars venatica*, and defend the often abused noble animals which contribute so largely to our health and amusement, and whose services are often ill requited—the horse and the hound.

In these times of necessary retrenchment, as pressing particularly upon gentlemen of landed property, it will be my endeavour to point out how a fox hunting establishment may be conducted, with a strict view to economy in every department, consistent with respectability and efficiency. Many ardent lovers of the sport are deterred from taking the management of hounds in their own country, by the generally received opinion of the enormous expenses attendant on such an establishment—and enormous in many instances they certainly are. These, however, arise chiefly from the ignorance or inattention

of the master himself, and his consequent dependence upon servants, or a natural disposition to lavish expenditure. Some men will do as much with a dollar as others would with a guinea. Let no one, however, imagine that the mastership of a pack of foxhounds is a trifling matter, or his position a very enviable one; it is attended with many expenses, great responsibility, and unceasing exertion both of mind and body.

To the young aspirant, then, for honours in the noble science, I recommend the quotation at the head of this letter. The best race-horse would make a sorry appearance at the winning post without training, and no man should undertake the management of a pack of foxhounds who has not been accustomed from early youth to field sports.

The first pony I possessed when a boy was given me by my father, on the condition that after hunting I should clean and dress him myself. In those days, when clipping was not in fashion, this task was far from being a pleasant one; in addition to being pretty well tired myself, and sometimes wet to the skin, I was obliged to pull off my coat and set to work in good earnest; rubbing and scrubbing a thick coat of hair, matted with clay and dirt, I found no very great relish for after the novelty of the thing had worn off, and I accordingly remonstrated and begged to decline any further experiment in this line of business. My father's reply, however, soon cut short any further rebellion: "My law is the 'law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not;' if you don't like to clean your pony, I will sell him. I gave him to you on that condition, and for a particular purpose; that when you have servants

yourself you may know, from experience, what is required of them, and be able to tell them what to do, instead of their telling you." Having experienced once or twice before the consequences of lightly treating the "Laws of the Medes and Persians," there was no alternative left but submission. Fond of my pony, and fond of riding, I set to work with energy, and scrubbed away until I was sometimes ready to cry with vexation at the little progress I made on his bear-like hide. Soon, however, as a reward for my perseverance, a lad was given me to assist in these labours; and then, indeed, I was happy.

You are not to infer from this early tuition that my father was a man of very limited income, quite the contrary; but he was (although the kindest and best of parents) one of the old school, and a strict disciplinarian. He brought up his children as the Spartans of old, to meet danger boldly, and to overcome difficulties by perseverance. From childhood we were taught to ride and disregard falls, and at ten years of age we had guns put into our hands—puny weapons, indeed, and made for our particular use. After a few lessons at priming and loading, and firing at a mark, we were allowed to roam the fields and farm yard in quest of our game, *separately*, never *together*. Such was the regulation issued from head quarters. Considerable havoc was made among the sparrows, and a blackbird was looked upon by such urchins in the light of a blackcock.

But I am rambling away from my subject. There is no absolute necessity for a master of hounds being a good groom, although there is for his being a good rider, if he intends to hunt his own pack, and see the end as well

as the beginning of a good run. He will never, however, neglect an opportunity of acquiring knowledge, even in such a trivial matter as dressing a horse, if he is a man of sense.

I shall now proceed to instruct my tyro on all that relates to the kennel department, and as a first step we must build a house before we can live in it. Many think anything will do for hounds, or dogs as they are often contemptuously called, but as all our sport depends upon the health and strength of the hound, the first consideration is a healthy kennel. This should be placed upon some high and dry situation (all high situations not being necessarily dry ones); the building should face the south, and there should be no large trees near it. To hunt three or four days a week you will require about forty couples of hounds, according to the country. The lodging rooms should be four in number, by which you will have a dry floor for the hounds to go into every morning (the pack in the hunting season being in two divisions), instead of its being washed down, whilst the hounds are left shivering in the cold on a bleak winter's day, which I have seen done, when the huntsman has been too busy to walk them out during this process.

Nothing is more prejudicial to hounds than damp lodging rooms, a sure cause of rheumatism and mange, to which dogs are peculiarly liable. I have seen them affected by rheumatism in various ways, and totally incapacitated from working; sometimes they are attacked in the loins, but more often in the shoulders, which some huntsmen call the kennel-lameness, and so in reality it is, the kennel-lameness proceeding either from a damp situation, damp lodging rooms, or damp straw—perhaps

all these combined. For some years there was a malady of this sort, said to be peculiar to the New Forest, and attributed by some to the boggy nature of the ground over which the hounds had to run; by others to the little stunted gorse so prevalent on the open heath. Mr. Nicol, however, I believe, thought differently, and tried various expedients to render the kennels more healthy, and had the benches constructed so high off the ground that the hounds went up stairs to bed. I do not hear that the pack which now hunts the New Forest country have been affected with the same malady, and this, I think, is owing to a change of situation, as I have seen hounds from other kennels labouring under similar attacks, which have recovered when removed to more healthy situations. No doubt greater attention is paid in these enlightened days to the comfort and health of hounds; yet much remains to be done, and many prejudices of huntsmen to be removed.

In building new kennels, the earth should be removed from the lodging-room floor, to the depth of a foot at least, and in its place broken stones, sifted gravel, or cinders substituted, with a layer of fine coal ashes, upon which the bricks or floor is to be laid in hot coal ash mortar. Bricks are preferable to stone. Outside the walls a drain about three feet deep should be constructed, with a draining pipe of two inches bore at the bottom, and filled up with broken stones to within six inches of the surface. This drain is to be carried quite round the building, and will fall into the main sewer. For a roof to the building I prefer thatch to tiles, as affording more warmth in winter and coolness in summer, but as slate tiles are more agreeable to the eye, a thin layer of reed placed under the tiles will answer the purpose.

Over the centre of the lodging room should be a sleeping apartment for the feeder, which being raised above the level of the other roof, will break the monotony of its appearance. At the rear of the kennels should be the boiling house, feeding court, straw house, &c., for bitches. In front of the kennels, and extending round to the back door of the feeding house, should be a good large green-yard, enclosed by a wall or palings. The former I prefer, although, perhaps, most expensive, for several reasons: hounds being able to see through the latter, will be excited by passing objects, and young hounds (for whose service the green-yard is more particularly intended) are inclined to become noisy, by barking and running round the palings when any strange dog passes by. Having used palings at first in my own yard, I was obliged to remove them, from the following circumstance:—One day, whilst the young hounds were out at their usual game of romps, running round the palings, a mad dog chanced to pass by. One of them was bitten, and I lost seven couples, and but for the greatest watchfulness, I should have lost the whole pack. Upon this subject I shall make further remarks in a future letter.

In the boiling house you will require two cast iron boilers, one for the meal, the other for flesh. If a spring of good water can be made available, by being conducted first into the boiling house and then through the kennels, by earthenware pipes, it will save much time and labour to the feeder; if not, a well should be sunk near the boiling house. By having large wooden spouts under the eaves of the roof of the kennels, and tanks or water butts to receive the rain water, enough may be saved to

wash the kennels, but for cooking purposes the purest water is requisite. Allow of no stagnant pools near the kennels. To each lodging room there should be two doors; one at the back, with a small sliding panel high up, through which the huntsman may observe the hounds, without their seeing him; another door in the front, with a large opening cut at the bottom, high enough and wide enough for a hound to pass through easily, and which should always be left open at night to allow free egress to the court. There must be another door also in the partition wall between each kennel, by which in the summer two lodging rooms may be thrown together. The benches should be made of pine or oak spars, and not nailed on to the frame, but joined together by threes or fours. They can thus be easily taken up, and the frame moved aside, whilst the kennel is being washed down. The height of the benches from the floor should be about two feet, which will admit of tired hounds easily lying down. I need hardly remark that a mop is very essential to the cleanliness of the kennel, and will be in constant requisition. Stone or iron troughs are best for the hounds to have their water in. They should be placed rather high off the ground, for obvious reasons, and fresh water supplied every day.

In some establishments there is a separate kennel for the young hounds, with a grass yard attached for their own use, and it is certainly very advantageous; but with a little caution the buildings and courts I recommend will be sufficient, and be the saving of considerable expense.

In the hunting season the old hounds will not require the green-yard at all, as they should be walked out, two

or three times a day, into a paddock or field, and not allowed to lie about in the yard or courts, but should be shut up in their lodging rooms as soon as they return home, particularly the day after hunting.

In the rear of the kennels should be a covered passage (into which the doors of the middle kennel should open) leading to the feeding house, which stands under the same roof with the boiling house, and is only separated from it by a lath and plaster partition or wall. This passage is intended to answer the purpose of a warm bath, also for the hounds' feet after hunting, for which purpose the bricks are to be gradually sloped from each end to the centre, which is to be about a foot deep, and in which is placed a large flat stone with a plug hole, to let off the water into a drain, as soon as the hounds are washed. On both sides of this passage will be a paved court, with a small lodging house at each end, one for lame hounds, and the other for those young hounds who may be seriously ill from distemper.

In the feeding room should be also two large coolers for the oatmeal, when boiled, to be placed in. You may then make by one boiling sufficient pudding to last two or three days, which will be a considerable saving in fuel. In clean coolers it will keep well for this time, but not if placed in the feeding troughs. At the end of the feeding house is a door leading into the grass yard, or out into the field. When hounds are very dirty they may be passed several times through the passage bath; four buckets of hot liquor, with a handful of common salt being thrown into the bath to keep it at a moderate temperature.

A plan of these kennels is here annexed, the con-

struction of which, where stone is plentiful, would not much exceed two hundred pounds.

In my next letters I purpose treating of the purchasing of hounds, the oldest blood now extant, and the packs from which the best drafts are likely to be obtained, kennel management, breeding and rearing whelps, treatment of young hounds when first brought into the kennel, various kinds of distemper, with remedies and receipts, the duties of huntsmen, whipper-in, and feeder, during the summer months, the quantity of food necessary for each hound, with the expenses of the establishment.

LETTER II.

WE must now commence operations by either purchasing a ready-made pack of hounds, or forming one by drafts from other kennels. At the end of every hunting season there are generally two or three packs submitted to the hammer by Messrs. Tattersall, or disposed of by private contract through their agency. Although horses still maintain high prices, even higher than ever, the same observation, for what reason I know not, does not hold good with regard to hounds. There are certainly many more packs of hounds kept now than formerly in the days of Meynell and Corbet; but hunting men have increased *pari passu* also. In place of the forty or fifty who, in bygone days, were wont to greet the master and the rising sun at the covert side, we may now count two or three hundred assembled at a favourite fixture in a good country, at the fashionable hour of eleven, about the hour when our forefathers returned from the chase to prepare for dinner.

“Fashion in all things blindly rules,
The jest of wise men, guide of fools.”

Still there is no reason why we should quarrel about hours, and our enlightened Nimrods of the present generation have so many arguments in favour of late hours:—“No reason why we should get up in the mid-

dle of the night ; hunting was not intended for a labour, but a recreation ;" " Scent is generally better as the day grows older" [query] ; " Sensible hour eleven ; plenty of time for breakfast and reading your letters before starting for the covert side ;" and, to crown all, " Foxes more likely to show sport, having had more time to digest their supper of last night." There is something in this last remark. What a cowardly crew our grandpapas must have been to disturb poor Mr. Reynolds before he had fully enjoyed his first nap, and so soon after dinner too ! Yet the said Mr. Reynolds, although so uncereimoniously treated, contrived pretty often to show them a light pair of heels, and beat them out of sight and hearing. Then they were such a set of slow coaches in those days, with their pigtails, mahogany boot tops, and garters round their knees ! Not a whit slower, my fashionable friends, than you of the present railroad era, only, as Mr. Weller would say, " they had *rayther* a different notion of doing things." Foxes were not quite so plentiful, and altogether a different kind of animal—no Piccadillys, or French importations—but in most countries a fine large greyhound fox, long in the body and high on his legs, who was not to be so easily handled as the present mixed and degenerate race. In those days also, there were no large game preserves where foxes could glut themselves with little trouble—they had to travel far in search of food, and sometimes went supperless to their kennels. Scarcity of foxes rendered it necessary to begin early in the morning upon the drag, and instead of riding and mobbing a fox to death, almost as soon as found, our forefathers made the most of him, not being very sure about finding another. The

hurry-scurry, helter-skelter, tallhy-ho, whoo-hoop system of the present day is not fox *hunting*, but fox *murdering*.

Hounds are not so much faster now-a-days than they were formerly, but the system is faster. I know this is debateable ground, and I shall probably be laughed at for such a remark. But let the fast men of the present day try the experiment; let them match two couples of their fastest hounds against time, over the Beacon Course, at Newmarket, and see if they can beat Mr. Barry's Bluecap, who, in the famous match with Mr. Meynell's hounds, ran the four miles in a few seconds over eight minutes. Colonel Thornton's bitch, Merkin, is said to have run the same distance in *seven minutes and half a second*. Beat this, my fast young brother fox hunters of the present day, and then laugh if you can!

I am, however, now going too fast myself, and *skirting* decidedly. Hark back! to my subject—purchasing hounds. When a pack is sold at the hammer, it is generally in lots, so that you may get a few couples of good hounds to begin upon, if you are not inclined to purchase the entire pack. Sometimes a very fair pack of hounds (not first-rate, of course) may be bought for about £500, and there is a great advantage in having a pack made to your hand, although not anything, perhaps, very particular; but to obtain almost any body of hounds which have been working together is far better than undertaking the arduous task of forming one from drafts, and in the end less expensive also. You can soon improve them by infusing other blood, or adding occasionally a few couples from other kennels. In the event, however, of not having an opportunity of purchasing a

pack, we must try and make one up with the best materials at hand.

It may be considered invidious my making comparison between the many first-rate establishments now in existence; I should, therefore, select from those kennels where the oldest and best blood is to be found, and also from those where I should be likely to obtain hounds suitable to my purpose. Whatever huntsmen may say about their old draft, look always with most suspicion upon hounds of three and four years old. They may tell you they are too high or too low, too fast or too slow; but the truth is, they are too faulty for them to keep. It is but fair you should have them with others. You take the draft as it is, and must make the best of it. The five and six seasoned hounds are the only ones you can depend upon in this lot; and if you obtain your drafts from the grass countries you will have a better chance, as they generally draft hounds, although very good, which cannot keep the pace in a flying country; but they will make a very fair fight in a provincial or wooded one. These will form your body-guard—tried and veteran troops—upon whose steadiness you must rest your hopes of final victory. I commenced in this way myself; and being fortunate in having a friend who was doing the same thing, he agreed to take all I did not require at two guineas per couple. Having such a chance, I did not mince the matter; but got together all the drafts I could lay my hands upon from good kennels, both young and old, so that I had the picking of nearly a hundred couples of hounds to begin with.

The best blood at that time was to be found in the kennels of the Dukes of Grafton, Beaufort, and Rutland,

Lords Lonsdale and Fitzwilliam, Sir Thomas Mostyn, and Messrs. Ward and Osbaldeston, from several of whom I obtained hounds. Some of the old kennels still remain, such as the Dukes of Rutland and Beaufort's, Lord Fitzwilliam and Yarborough's. Mr. Drake, I believe, succeeded to Sir Thomas Mostyn's pack. Lord Southampton purchased also the greater part of Mr. Osbaldeston's late pack.

For a draft of young hounds I think I should select the pack of the Wonderful Squire of Tedworth, for several reasons. First, he has some good old blood, having bought the Duke of Grafton's hounds; and before that he had been breeding largely from Mr. Ward's kennel. His hounds have a rough flinty and woodland country to contend with, where they must hunt as well as run. In their performances they are like their master—second to none. They are not halloed and hustled about by whippers-in, although the Squire is occasionally very cheery when things go well; and that happens so often, that I hardly ever saw a day with him when he was not cheery. His hounds, however, are left to do their work pretty much by themselves; and I may venture to say that no pack of hounds in England, Scotland, Ireland, or Wales, can beat them in any respect. They can show their speed at a racing pace over the Downs, and bustle along through the large woodlands, and over those confounded flinty hills (which rattle like broken bottles), at a rattling rate indeed; the wonder is, that they don't cut their legs off. The Squire hunts six days a week, and therefore has a large body of hounds in kennel—sometimes nearly a hundred couples; he breeds largely also, and judiciously—the result of great know-

ledge and long experience. He has also a very able assistant in Carter, who came into his service with the Grafton hounds.

I have had many good hounds from Lord Fitzwilliam's kennel, which has so long flourished under the able superintendence of that first-rate huntsman, Sebright. Not having seen the Belvoir pack for some years, I cannot say what their appearance or performances may now be; but when I saw them some few years ago, Goosey being huntsman, they were at that time the cleverest pack of hounds for their height I had ever met with, and I have looked over a few kennels in my time. There is also a chance of obtaining some good drafts from Lord Henry Bentinck's kennel in Lincolnshire. His present pack is composed of Lord Ducie's, with an addition of some twenty couples from Mr. Wyndham. No man living was a better judge of the shape and make of a foxhound, and what his performances ought to be in the field, than Lord Ducie. He spared neither expense nor trouble in getting together well-bred hounds, and drafting largely again, and to his liberality in this respect many of his brother masters of hounds were deeply indebted. His Lordship's retirement from public life as M. F. H. is greatly to be deplored. There are also the Duke of Beaufort's, a very old and popular sort, and deservedly so; they are a fine lot of hounds, the dogs large and clever, with plenty of bone and power, straight on their legs, and, in short, what foxhounds ought to be. The lady pack, as near perfection as they can be. Under the able direction of Will Long, the present huntsman, who is not bigoted, as many are, to their own blood only, these hounds are greatly improved within the last few

years, and have shown superior sport, not only running hard in, but overhauling their foxes in long runs with a ticklish scent. Long has a thorough knowledge of his business, fully appreciates old pedigrees, and is altogether well fitted to hold the situation which he now does with credit to the Duke and satisfaction to the country. Lord Yarborough's are a favourite sort with many, and Lord Seagrave's, who both breed largely, with many others in fashion at the present time. I would begin if I could with the *old drafts* from the Duke of Rutland's, the Quorn, Sir R. Sutton's, Lord Fitzwilliam's, and Lord Henry Bentinck's, which I think most likely to supply the most useful five and six year old hounds. For the young unentered hounds, I should go to the kennels of Tedworth, the Badminton, Lord Fitzwilliam's, and the Duke of Rutland's. To hunt two and sometimes three days a week, you must purchase at least a hundred couples of hounds, but you need not keep them longer than you are obliged. When you have bought the old draft, the huntsman will, I have no doubt, tell you what hounds are likely to answer your purpose; view with suspicion the three and four seasoned ones, and if out of fifty couples of old, you can select twenty which will hold out through the season, you may consider yourself fortunate. Put forward twenty-five couples of unentered hounds at least; be not over particular as to appearances, but keep the best bred. You will have to contend with distemper and other maladies, and young hounds are seldom safe until they have been rounded, and have passed over the summer months.

If you intend hunting your hounds yourself, you will

require a clever and steady man, who has filled the situation of first whipper-in or huntsman, whose character will bear investigation as to sobriety and respectability; a good temper is also indispensable. As the breaking in of the young hounds will probably devolve upon him, take care he is a quiet and patient man with hounds, and you will see such conduct exercise a decided influence over the pack. The best hounds may be spoiled in much less time than many imagine, by a hurry-scurry fellow, and a wild pack soon brought to their senses by a quiet and sensible man. Hounds possess much more discrimination than they are given credit for, and soon assimilate themselves to their master. If he be steady, they will be steady also; if wild, they will be wild too, and ready for riot and mischief.

You must look out also for a whipper-in. Choose one from a good stock, and who has been bred up in a hunting establishment. Such are to be found—sons of respectable huntsmen, who may possibly not have had the opportunity of advancing them very far in their own line of business, from no vacancy occurring in their master's establishment. There is, I think, great and undue importance attached to light weights in the present day. I confess it has no weight with me, and never had. Anything in the shape of a whipper-in under eleven stone I should not object to, if he were active and a good rider. I do not mean by this a hard rider. I have had both light and heavy men, and found the latter did not take more out of their horses, and were altogether better riders over a stiffly enclosed country. The best whipper-in I ever had stood nearly six feet; but he was a very wiry and elastic fellow; no useless

lumber about him, but all bone and muscle. He lived with me many years, was an excellent servant, rode well up to his hounds across country, and never killed or injured a horse the whole time he was in my service, which he only left to take a huntsman's place. The man who succeeded him was a light weight, and in my own opinion a very bad rider, although always up with the hounds. He played the rogue with his horses, and killed one of the best of mine before the season was over.

The feeder should be a young active man, not afraid of work, sober, good tempered, and fond of animals. When your young hounds come into kennel he will have plenty to do, if the hunting season is not over.

We hear every year of the fearful ravages committed by the distemper, and no wonder; the wonder is that so many live through it. In place of the free air of the country, with the wide fields to roam over, for health and exercise, the young hounds are suddenly transferred to a prison, highly fed, but without the necessary accompaniment to health—fresh air and exercise. They soon sicken, as a matter of course. Prevention is better than cure—although I do not mean to say the distemper can be prevented altogether from attacking young hounds when brought into the confinement of a kennel yard; but it may be ameliorated, and the hounds prepared to resist its attacks, by careful and judicious treatment. I know some old and good sportsmen have an idea that high feeding is alone sufficient to withstand the ravages of this dreadful malady. Nature unassisted will do much, but wisely assisted will do more. Some kennels are lightly visited by this scourge of the canine race, others suffer with severity. In some seasons, also, it is

more virulent than in others; but where a large lot of young hounds come in from their walks, almost at the same time, the distemper will soon break out among them, in some shape or other. Air and exercise, with good and not over high feeding, is the best preventive, or rather preparation, for its attack. As soon as possible after they come into kennel, within a week at least, put the couples on them, and have them out, a few couples at a time, if only for an hour in the day.

Let the feeder have another man to help him at this time with a boy, if hunting is not over, and keep the young hounds out as long as they can every day. Do not be afraid of their running cur dogs, or worrying sheep, or committing any such enormities. They have been used to these since the day they were first sent out to walk; but it is no wonder, when, after having been pent up for a month or two within the prison walls, without seeing another living object but themselves and the feeder, they should run after the first animal they see; whether cur, dog, sheep, or donkey.

I heard of a lot of young hounds, which, if report speaks true, did actually pull down a young animal of this last harmless race, and that not so very long ago either, even in these scientific and enlightened days. It happened in this wise. I tell the story as it was told to me. The huntsman and two whips were out with the young hounds, then considered sufficiently steady to dispense with couples; at the turning into a wide green lane suddenly appeared the light and airy form of a young animal of this much despised race; one look at the company sufficed, and away he went down the lane, trotting, capering, and kicking up his heels; the ground being

undulating, sometimes his ears only appeared. The attention of the young hounds became excited, and one or two tried to obtain a nearer view of the retreating object. Sundry objurgations of the whipper-in seemed only to increase their curiosity, and when he was in the act of cutting Jumper's head off, or trying to do it, with his heavy whip on one side of the lane, Foreman at the other made a fair bolt of it, and away went the party as if running for the St. Leger. The huntsman hallooing, whippers-in swearing and rating, made the hounds think the game was up in right good earnest, and they of course could not do less than add their voices to the chorus. Donkey, thinking matters becoming serious, no longer carried his head jauntily from side to side, looking over his back, and giving an occasional note on his trumpet, but frightened at the din in his rear, he laid his ears back upon his shoulders, and set off as fast as his legs would carry him, blowing his horn furiously all the way. The whipper-in being mounted only on a pony, stuck the spurs in with fury to head them, but as misfortune seldom comes singly, little Mischief happened to get in the way, and down came pony and whipper-in crash together, Jack undermost. "Here's a go," roars the huntsman; "pick yourself up, Jack, as soon as you can, for there's a row and no mistake; you havn't no bones broken, I hope." "I han't no bones broken that I am aware on just yet," murmurs Jack; "but somehow or other, t'aint so easy to get up again;" and no wonder, the pony's fore foot was in Jack's coat-pocket! Matters were soon adjusted, however, and Jack was up, and off to the rescue, like mad, muttering more anathemas against Jumper and Foreman, than all the cardinals put

together against Protestant recusants. "If I don't sarve out Mr. Jumper and Foreman for this spree, my name's not Jack; and that infernal polkering donkey, if them young-uns havn't already settled his business afore I get's up, I'll cut him into shreds."

Fortunately there was not much mischief done to the donkey (except being pulled down) when the huntsman reached the scene of action, and the hounds, satisfied with their freak, seemed quite ashamed of themselves. Jack wreaked his vengeance upon Jumper and Foreman; and thus, as he thought, the whole affair was ended—the least said about it the better. But it was not so snug as Jack fancied. Upon riding through the village of B—a day or two after, sundry greetings from the unwashed urchins saluted Jack's ears, such as "E-aw, e-aw, who hunted the donkey?" "Come," says Jack, "drop that suit, my fine fellows, or I'll drop my double thong upon some of ye, and make ye sing a different tune."

Misfortunes will happen in the best regulated families sometimes. Idleness is the parent of vice, and when the young hounds are over the distemper, they cannot have too much air and exercise; but if, as I have said above, they are walked out by the feeder every day, with an assistant and boy, they won't care much about cur dogs or donkeys, and save Jack's whip-cord as well. When the hunting is over, the huntsman will have nothing to do but attend to the kennel. The old hounds will be glad of a little rest from their labours of the past season, and his attention may be directed almost exclusively to the young hounds; keep them out half the day, if possible, early and late, with the horses in

the morning, and walk them out several times during the day.

The summer is a more busy time with a good huntsman than the winter, and he will require three hacks or ponies, for himself and assistants, to give the hounds proper exercise.

LETTER III.

As the efficiency of the pack will depend upon judicious breeding, I should recommend your not making use of any hounds for this purpose until they have been fairly tried, for two seasons at least, in the field; by this time their real characters will be thoroughly developed, and there is not much risk of their altering afterwards.

The bitches you breed from should possess certain points of symmetry, or they will not produce fine progeny. Without length in their flanks and width over their loins, they will not prove good brood bitches; and without such, no pack of hounds can be kept up to a proper standard.

The symmetry of a foxhound, to be perfect, must be nearly as possible as follows:—Head rather wide than narrow, neck long and clean, shoulders lying well back, muscles behind the shoulder blades full, ribs wide rather than deep, back long with good loins, fore legs short and straight, and standing clear of the body at the elbows, feet round, plenty of muscle in the thighs, hams long, hocks short to the foot. Many fancy narrow heads, and a deep rather than wide chest. That is the greyhound shape. Such hounds may run a quick burst to perfection, but for hard work and lasting qualities give me the wide ribs, with plenty of room for the play of the lungs.

One hears a great deal in the present day about snake

heads and swan-like necks, and very pretty they are to look at. Much contempt, also, is thrown upon what is facetiously called John Ward's neckcloth. Yet, notwithstanding, there is a good deal of neckcloth still to be seen in many hounds; and I do not find that these old-fashioned-looking gentlemen are a bit worse than your more dandified-looking brethren.

Mr. Ward was, undoubtedly, one of the best breeders of foxhounds in his day; some of them, it must be confessed, were rather throaty, with large heads as well, but the frame-work was generally correct. They were, however, good at their game, steady drawers, good and quick hunters, and stout to the last. They were too large unquestionably for the flinty country they hunted, and their feet suffered severely; but when they changed their country, no pack of hounds ever showed more sport. They could do what many packs cannot afford to do—give their fox a fair start, and make pretty sure of catching him afterwards. Good heads and necks are very desirable for appearance sake, but they are not to be considered essential points.

The earlier you can begin breeding the better. November is the earliest month for coupling, but whelps born after May seldom arrive at perfection. The season exercises a decided influence over young animals of almost every kind, I believe—certainly over horses and hounds. Of this I saw a remarkable instance in two litters of puppies by the same sire and dam, in two successive seasons. The first litter, produced in the month of February, were very clever, with good legs and feet; the second litter, born in June following, were just the reverse; in fact, out of the five whelps saved, there was not one

with straight legs. As they were a very favourite sort, they were notwithstanding put forward, and they turned out quite as good as their better favoured brothers and sisters, but from physical deficiency could not stand quite so hard a day's work. I gave one of these hounds to a friend, in whose kennel he remained many years, and he said he would do more work up to a certain time than any five couples he had. From another of these hounds I again bred, and his stock was straight on their legs and clever. It is a generally received opinion that like begets like, but colour, shape, and disposition will often run back (as huntsmen term it) to generations that are passed. For many years I had a favourite sort of black and white hounds with tanned faces, but on one occasion a perfectly white whelp made its appearance. Looking back for an explanation of this phenomenon, I found that her great grandmother had been also white.

Foxhounds, if well bred, will give little trouble in breaking, and there is not much fear of their turning out well afterwards. Those who breed largely are nearly sure of a fine looking entry of young hounds; but those who breed with caution and judgment will have the best pack of hounds. Nothing injures a pack more than the failure of the two-seasoned hunters. The first season young hounds do not often exhibit their real characters, but in the second, if there is anything amiss in the pedigree, it will come out. Be therefore very careful in selecting stallions for your bitches; choose those of well tried good character, good drawers, quick hunters, and hard workers, but never use a flashy hound, and never put an old dog to an old bitch. A young bitch will often produce a fine litter of whelps from an old dog,

but the offspring of old bitches will be generally small and light of bone. A famous breeder of race horses once said of a favourite mare, that it was of no consequence what horse she was put to, for she always produced a winner. This is not the case with hounds; they follow the character and shape of their sire as much as their mother, and if there is any peculiarity about him, it will generally be seen in his descendants.

You need not pay much attention to speed, which is thought too much of in the present day. All hounds go fast enough, but a fast hound and a quick one are widely different. I would rather breed from a good hound who always kept a fair place in the pack, without exhibiting himself too much in front. We have plenty of dash and flash in the foxhound already, and at times too much of it for sport. When a fox turns short, he is often lost by those dashing gentlemen going over the scent by half a mile or so. When foxes are plentiful you can of course go and draw for another, and lose him perhaps in the same way.

As soon as your brood bitches become at all heavy they should be removed from the kennel, and put into the paddock intended for bitches and their whelps. In my plan for kennels there are two low sheds, one facing the south the other the west, for this purpose. The larger you can afford to make this paddock the better, but if the bitches can roam at large, it is far preferable for them, than being confined within ever so large a place. Air and exercise will greatly contribute to the health of the mother and her offspring, and if possible the brood bitches should always have their liberty, care being taken that they are shut up before the evening. To prevent

their rambling about in search of food they should be fed regularly twice a day, at eight or nine o'clock in the morning and four or five in the evening. They should not have too much flesh in their meal, but if skim milk could be substituted for flesh they would do better on this diet. By over and injudicious feeding I have seen bitches so feverish that their hair came off, and the whelps when produced were scarcely worth keeping. It is a good plan to give them a few Epsom salts in liquor, once or twice a week before whelping. They are intended more as an alterative than as physic. After whelping I give a table spoonful of castor oil, with sheep's head broth, or milk mixed with oatmeal, for two or three days. From that time there is little fear of their doing well, and as the whelps increase in size the mothers will become ravenous. I do not object then to their having raw flesh occasionally, not in lumps or in large quantities, but let the feeder cut most of the flesh from the bones, and then give them the bones to pick.

In selecting the whelps for keeping, take the longest and heaviest, unless you are particular as to colour. Five are a sufficient number for any bitch to rear if you wish them to be of a good size, but for the first two days I should leave six or seven with the mother, provided she has abundance of milk, not otherwise. This is only to provide against accidents, for bitches if young will often overlay and kill their whelps. Be careful, however, not to keep more than five with the mother, after two or three days have elapsed at farthest, or you will spoil the whole litter. If you want to raise your pack to a good standard, which is not to be done without fine brood bitches, keep only four whelps with the mother, all

bitches, and provide some wet nurses for the others if they are of a favourite sort. A terrier will bring up two as a makeshift, but I generally prefer a hound about whose own whelps you are not over particular, coming in at the same time with a favourite bitch, and you may then save nearly all the litter, at least eight or nine between the two.

Bitches sometimes produce a great many at a litter. I had one that brought into the world the extraordinary number of seventeen, but she died from exhaustion. Once coupling is sufficient if the bitch is put to the dog when at the turn of her heat. When the whelps are a few days old the dew claws should be cut off with a sharp pair of scissors, and a bit of the tail.

Puppies are very subject to worms, which, if not destroyed, will prevent their growth and often produce fatal fits. You may give them occasionally a dessert spoonful of linseed oil when a fortnight old, and when a month or six weeks old, if the worms are not destroyed, add a teaspoonful of spirits of turpentine to the oil, and give it in the morning fasting. As soon as the puppies can lap let them have some milk and their oatmeal mixed together three times a day, which will relieve the mother. Give it them warm, and remove what they do not eat at once.

There is a little white louse by which puppies are generally tormented; they form into bunches on the neck and back, and will produce mange unless speedily removed. Rape oil, thickened with sulphur to the consistency of cream, will destroy them, and not injure either the whelps or their mother. I have heard of tobacco water and other things being used for this purpose, but there is no necessity for any such noxious remedies. If

the first dressing of oil and sulphur does not destroy the lice, dress again in a few days, and with the addition of a small proportion of spirits of turpentine. At two months old the whelps are fit to go out to walk. Many huntsmen keep them till they are a month older, but I see no advantage in it. They are certainly stronger at three months than at two months old, but they are not likely to get a bellyfull of good oatmeal porridge, with plenty of meat and broth mixed with it, three times or even twice a day at their walks, or perhaps none at all, and will feel the want of this strong diet more severely. When sent out to a farm house at two months old they will get a tolerable supply of milk and whey twice a day, which at that age is more suitable to them, and I think they improve faster, and are not so likely to be checked in their growth. There is a very great difference in quarters. Some farmers take a pride in sending the young hounds home well grown and well fed; with others they have a very rough time of it. It must be confessed that a foxhound puppy is often very mischievously disposed, and some little acknowledgment ought to be made to the farmer's wife, in the shape of a gown, bonnet, or shawl, when such has been the case. Giving premiums, also, is an encouragement to have the young hounds well kept, and I found it paid wonderfully; for the best dog £4, second £3, third £2, fourth £1, and the same for bitches.

It is a good plan to give names with the whelps when first sent out to their quarters; they will be more handy when returned to the kennel, and come readily when called. When the young hounds come in, everything is strange to them, and many are very shy and sulky.

It is now that you will see the use of having a good-tempered and cheerful man as feeder; such a one will soon gain the affection and confidence of the young hounds; animals soon find out those who are fond of them. Let the feeder be with them as much as possible; if he takes some broken biscuits in his pockets, or bits of meat, and plays and romps with them for only an hour on each day, on the third day they will follow him anywhere. This may appear all very childish, and great nonsense to many; wiser men, however, than your humble servant "Scrutator" have been caught romping and playing with children, and if you wish your hounds to be attached to you, you must treat them in the same way. I once saw a huntsman at high romps with the young hounds in the summer. He was out in a paddock behind the kennels, tossing up bits of biscuit high in the air for them to catch, throwing some to a distance, and playing all sorts of tricks with them; it ended by his going to the end of the paddock and having a race home with them to the kennel. A friend of mine who was with me, witnessing this game, exclaimed, "What a fool that fellow must be." "Well," I said, "you may think him so, but with all his folly he can do more with his hounds, both in the kennel and in the field, than any man of the present day." "Why," he replied, "he will set them fighting, with all this nonsense." "Tell him so then, and hear what he will say." "Well," he said, "Mr. Huntsman, you seem out of breath with your exertions. I should think that romping most likely to end in a general row." "No fear of that, Sir; we have our school time as well as play time, and I can check them in a moment if I see any disposition to quarrel."

These hounds would do anything for him: if he called one by name he would bound to him with the greatest alacrity, and try to jump on his shoulders, dancing round and fawning upon him like a spaniel. He never had a whip in his hand in the kennel, nor would he ever allow a whipper-in to help draw hounds, as I have seen in many kennels. He could separate the dogs and the bitches, when all standing together, at a word, by ordering the dogs to one side and the bitches to the other side of the yard. I have seen this attempted by other huntsmen, but it was not done without trouble and the assistance of the whipper-in. All that he did was by kindness, good temper, and perseverance, and *without the whip*. Some of your readers may say, "What is the use of all this?" You shall know. His hounds were remarkable for good conduct and steadiness in the field, and seldom missed their fox. They drew beautifully, steadily, and quickly, were very handy when making their cast, no whipper-in being required to turn them; one word from their huntsman and a waive of his hand would bring them to any point he wished. To their Master's cheer or "halloo" they would dash like wild things, and when at the end of a long and hard run they heard his cheering voice, with the well-known cry of "Have at him again," every hound seemed renovated with fresh vigour, their bristles would rise, and the fox's fate was soon sealed. More than this, it is the duty, as well as the interest of every man to treat all animals under his care with kindness, and not to get out of temper with them; severity is seldom required.

The distemper is generally preceded by a husky cough. At this the first stage of the complaint, an emetic should

be administered; many give warm salt and water. It is a simple and safe emetic, but I consider emetic tartar preferable. It acts almost immediately upon the stomach, and upon the system also, equalizing the circulation of the blood, reducing fever, and is an aperient. From two to three grains, or four, according to the size and strength of the dog, may be given in two table spoonfuls of warm water or broth. (As I am writing both for feeders and huntsmen, as well as their masters, it is necessary to explain as I proceed the why, when, and wherefore certain medicines are to be given.) The emetic being intended to act upon the bilious matter contained in the stomach and eject it, it follows of course that it should be given in the morning fasting, or it will have no effect beyond making the dog vomit. The efficacy of medicine is often lost by its being given at an improper time. Sometimes, too, when the dog is fractious, it is not half given. If the first dose does not produce vomiting *within an hour*, give two grains more. This is enough; if it does not act one way it will another. Put the hound by himself, and let him have some sheepshead broth, with the meat (if he will not take the broth without it), two hours after; *sooner*, it may be ejected. If the emetic has had good effect, and produced vomiting, give at night, about eight o'clock, three grains of calomel and three grains of crude opium, made into a pill, or mixed up with butter or lard. Take care the hound is not exposed to wet or damp with this medicine, nor must he have access to cold water. Early the next morning give him a table spoonful of castor oil, an hour after some warm sheepshead broth, milk and water, and warm whey, if you can get any. Whey at this particular period is better than any-

thing, and of itself will half effect a cure. On the *third morning*, should the dog continue to cough much, repeat the emetic, with the pill of calomel and opium at night as before. When getting better, give him eight grains of rhubarb and five of carbonate of potash every other day, an hour before feeding in the afternoon. When hounds refuse their food, and before the distemper shows itself, the following is a good recipe:—One ounce of aloes, three quarters of an ounce of iron dust, two drachms of carbonate of ammonia. Make it into a mass, and give a pill the size of a hazel nut, fasting; repeat the third day. This requires no confinement, and the dog may drink cold water if he likes.

There is another species of distemper, by huntsmen called the yellows or jaundice, which, unless at once checked, will end fatally in three or four days, sometimes much quicker. The symptoms are drowsiness and loss of appetite, succeeded by a yellow appearance of the whites of the eyes; the gums appear highly inflamed, and the whole skin will soon assume a yellow hue. If the dog is high in condition, *bleeding at the very first will do good*; but if the yellow hue has already spread over the skin, bleeding then will most likely kill him. Give an emetic first—three or four grains of emetic tartar in warm water. Two hours after give the following made into a pill:—Three grains of calomel, three grains crude opium, three grains emetic tartar. The following day give another pill as follows:—Six grains turbeth mineral, half a drachm of asafoetida, ten grains of castile soap. Repeat this the third day; keep the dog warm and from cold water; diet, sheepshead broth, with meal or whey, little or no meat. The fourth night

if the symptoms are subsiding, give two grains of calomel and three grains of James's powders.

Young hounds are also attacked sometimes by inflammation of the lungs; symptoms, difficulty of breathing, short cough, heart beating quickly, eyes and gums red and inflamed, nose hot and dry, with great restlessness. Here bleeding freely at first is the chief remedy, and it must be repeated if necessary. Give a pill at night, composed of three grains of calomel and three grains of James's powders. Early in the morning half an ounce of Epsom salts in warm water. If the inflammation continues, give three grains of James's powders every four hours during the next day. The dog must not be kept *too* warm; but cold water, and even exposure to cold air, would be fatal. Calomel is a very efficacious medicine with dogs, but they are differently affected by it: with some two grains will have a powerful effect. I have therefore in these prescriptions followed the middle course. No doctor would prescribe for a patient without seeing him; and, as so much depends upon the strength and constitution of the patient, a good deal of discretion must be left with the huntsman and feeder. With proper and judicious treatment ten out of a dozen hounds may be saved by using the remedies I have prescribed. When a young hound is weak and dainty, give him the yolk of a fresh egg in the morning without the white. I must reserve further remarks and other remedies for my next letter.

LETTER IV.

As I have before observed, prevention is better than cure; and where attention is paid to the diet of hounds, relaxing from the high state of feeding which is required in the hunting season, as soon as that season is over, the strong measures resorted to in many kennels for keeping hounds free from mange, and other maladies, may be rendered totally unnecessary. High feeding is, with both old and young hounds, highly prejudicial to their health, in the spring and during the summer months, but it is rather a difficult thing to convince huntsmen of this fact, as they all like to see their hounds fat and in high condition during the idle months. It is the practice in some kennels to bleed their hounds and dress them with some severe ointment, as soon as the hunting season is over.

Some few years since I paid a visit to a gentleman who has been for many years a master of hounds, and is so still, and a capital pack of hounds he has. Being at that time from home I went to the kennel to see the hounds, as a matter of course. The huntsman appeared very reluctant to admit me, saying the hounds had been dressed a day or two before, and were not fit to be seen. All his excuses, however, would not avail; having come some distance I resolved to have a look at them. Truly enough, they were not fit to be seen, for this huntsman, somewhat notorious for his sharp dressings, had dressed

them to so much purpose that their legs were swollen to double their usual size, and the poor animals were suffering severely. I remonstrated with him upon the absurdity and cruelty of subjecting his hounds to such torture, and asked him what his object could be in using such powerful and noxious ingredients, of which I was satisfied his ointment must be composed. His reply was, "It makes them look fine in their coats during the summer months, and the effects of the dressing are over in a few days." My rejoinder was not at all palatable to this great man, in his own opinion, as I gave him to understand that I considered a similar dressing might be applied much more satisfactorily to himself, with tarring and feathering to boot, than to the poor animals which were submitted to his tender mercies.

Prejudices are very difficult to remove, especially with huntsmen, who consider themselves a privileged class, and unfortunately ignorance and obstinacy often go hand in hand together. A man who is above being taught, or too conceited in his own opinion to benefit by that of others, whether peer or peasant, you may at once set down as an ignoramus. The best reason, perhaps the only one assigned for some of these practices, is that Mr. So-and-so, the duke's huntsman, used to treat his hounds in this manner; and thus things continue from huntsmen to whippers-in for years, without inquiry. Mr. Beckford also may be quoted as high authority, but if I recollect correctly his remarks upon the subject of dressing hounds are rather ambiguous. I may be considered very presumptuous in venturing to call in question such high authority, but it is quite evident from many observations made by Mr. Beckford, that although practi-

cally acquainted with all that related to the management of hounds and horses in the field, he was only theoretically so with regard to the kennel *regime*. On dressing hounds he remarks—"The oftener hounds are dressed I *suppose* the better they will look;" he does not say that he either *thinks* or *considers* they would look better, but merely *supposes*. In another case his feeder gives him information about boiling oatmeal and merely scalding barley meal. You may say such knowledge is only necessary for the feeder and huntsman, and I quite agree with you, if you have your ten thousand a year, and care little about the expenses of your hunting establishment.

I am not writing (as I stated at the commencement) for great men, who can afford to keep up great establishments, and who are not supposed to condescend to such trifling matters, but to a man of moderate means, and to one who has the management of a subscription pack, it will make some little difference whether his meal bill amounts to £250 or £500 in the course of the year.

As to dressing hounds, then, systematically and periodically, I merely state my own opinion, and that arrived at, after many years' experience and observation of all such matters. A pack of foxhounds *ought never to require dressing at all* as a general practice.

As to periodical bleeding, or, correctly speaking, as it used to be called, *blood-letting*, the practice is, I hope, nearly, if not quite, exploded. I never shall forget witnessing an exhibition of this *blood-letting* on a great scale by a huntsman, who was considered A 1 in his profession. He was standing in a small yard, well littered with straw, lancet in hand, with two assistants holding the hounds, a couple at a time, with the blood pouring

from their jugular veins, and the whole place covered with gore. Seeing no basin, or any vessel to measure quantity by, I asked this learned gentleman if he bled his hounds until they dropped, or how he was to determine when a sufficient quantity had been taken to suit his taste. He seemed to treat my question with contempt, remarking that he knew his business perfectly well, and how much blood each hound ought to lose. With all due deference to his opinion, I ventured to suggest that some of his patients looked as if they did not require blood-letting at all, and his rage was great when I offered to operate on himself, as exhibiting decided appearances of plethora.

When the hunting season is over, let the food be mixed thin, instead of stinting the hounds in the quantity, and give them a dose or two of Epsom salts. They should also have, once a week, sulphur and cream of tartar in their food. One pound of each is sufficient for about thirty couples of hounds. If any hound should break out in spots, or exhibit appearances of mange, give him, for three alternate nights, a teaspoonful of *Æthiop's* mineral, mixed up in lard, and afterwards half an ounce of Epsom salts in some warm liquor. Giving hounds physic in their food is, as I have before stated, very objectionable. When salts are given they should be mixed up with broth only; but when sulphur or cream of tartar (intended only as alteratives) are given to the whole pack, they may be fed late in the evening; and in this case it may be mixed with the meal.

During the summer months vegetables are very useful to keep hounds in health. Whey is also very cooling. I used to give young nettles in the spring of the year,

boiled with the flesh ; and, later in the summer, cabbages. I have also given mangel wurzel ; but this must be used with great caution at first, and requires a good deal of flesh to counteract its laxative properties. Potatoes also, when steamed, and mashed up, are good food, but if boiled, the water in which they are cooked should never be given with them. During the summer months my hounds had always whey once or twice a week. I got it at a neighbouring dairy farm, and used to pay 5s. for the meal, which was sufficient for thirty couples of hounds.

It is a good plan to have hounds brushed over when they are shedding their coats ; and as at this time the mange will sometimes make its appearance, turn the hair back, from the stern up to the head with one hand, and sprinkle a little plain sulphur with the other, so as to get into the roots of the hair ; smooth it down again, and, two days afterwards, give the hound a good brushing with the flesh-brush. Some huntsmen are very fond of swimming their hounds in the summer months. Once or twice it can do no harm ; but if had recourse to often it will make their coats coarse, and produce mange. The old and young hounds should take at least two hours' exercise with the horses alternate days, before breakfast. When they return, they should be fed lightly, and have their dinner at four or five o'clock in the evening. I have always fed my hounds twice a day ; their breakfast was strictly a breakfast only—a small bucket of pudding to two of broth for ten couples of hounds, all let in together ; but if any hounds were thin, and bad feeders, they were fed more liberally. I found hounds do better upon the same quantity of food given at two different meals, than at one only. During the summer months

hounds cannot be out too much. Mine were nearly all day out of the kennel, except at breakfast and dinner hours; in the heat of the day under the shade of trees, and at other times walking about. Nothing is so conducive to health as plenty of air and exercise.

With all due humility I now approach a subject which has arrested, if it has not occupied, the attention of the cleverest medical men of all ages, and in all climes—*rabies canina*, or hydrophobia—and which has hitherto baffled the skill of all. It is difficult to account for the appearance of this dreadful scourge, of the human as well as canine race, or to say for how long a period the virus may remain dormant in the system, before made to exhibit itself by some exciting cause. My own opinion is, that it may remain so for months certainly, and I am inclined to believe for years; and I will give my reasons presently for so thinking. When hydrophobia has once broken out, in either man or beast, I believe it hardly ever yet has been subdued, but I think from what I have observed, that its paroxysms may be much alleviated, and, I should say, successfully reduced, but I must leave to the medical profession to determine by what treatment and medicines. From its so unfrequently occurring, I am induced to think that very great attention of late has not been paid to hydrophobia, and being considered an incurable disease, remedies have been thought hopeless. That it may be prevented breaking out for *many years* in a subject who has been most severely bitten by a mad dog, I can attest. Many instances have been cited to the same effect by writers on this subject, and if we are to believe certain authorities of the old school, the Ormskirk medicine was an infallible remedy.

Beckfold talks of a whole pack of hounds belonging to a friend of his being bitten, and not one going mad which had been dosed with large quantities of Turbith mineral, also of a man who was cured by Sir George Cob's medicine. A learned writer, in the reign of King James the First, thus speaks of madness:—"In hounds and dogs which fall mad the cause is that black choler hath the mastery in his body, which choler once roasted in them through vehement heat, it overcometh the body, and maketh him to run mad, for the black choler, which is so strong, infecteth his brain, and so from thence goeth to all the other members, and maketh him venomous." He afterwards gives a list of medicines, which if not instructive, may be amusing to the reader, and I will leave him to determine which is likely to prove most efficacious. Here it follows:—"Also calamint, the seed of wild tares, sea onions, water-cresses, herbgrace, salt, aristolochia, nuts with rue, the roots of asperage, and the seed balsamum, vinegar, and the milk of an ass, child's urine, the stones of a hedgehog, the stones of a stag or an ass dried and drank; also castorium, garlic, gentian, mint, dittany."

From this dish of delicacies I leave our learned medical practitioners of the present day to make choice. Much has been written on this subject by other learned doctors from time to time, and Dr. Mead professes, that "in the space of thirty years he had an opportunity of giving his plan a trial no less than one thousand times with uniform success." Pity it is that all these wonderful remedies have either been lost to the present unenlightened generation, or not duly appreciated. In the *Medical Journal* many cases are mentioned as having been successfully

treated by our different medical men of later years, and I have little doubt that if remedies are applied *immediately* the bite is inflicted a cure may be effected.

How *rabies* arises it is for me impossible to determine, but that it may be caused by want of water, improper food, and long confinement, there is, I believe, little doubt; and I should say, it is more likely to break out in the spring months, when the weather is very variable, than at any other season of the year. We must also bear in mind that dogs are sometimes affected by fits *precisely* in the same manner as if labouring under the *rabies canina*; and of this I relate an instance which occurred to a dog of my own some three years since, and which I have still. May not other dogs have been similarly affected, and destroyed as mad? I went out on the moors for a walk in the month of May, being accompanied by a man who carried my fishing rod and basket, and a terrier, which had been given me about a fortnight before. This dog had been tied up in the stable of the public-house where I was staying, but he had been let out every day for a run, and I fed him myself to make him know me. He was a young dog, not a twelvemonth old, and had got over the distemper. When we had walked about four miles, and were on the open moors, the day being somewhat sultry, the dog suddenly began jumping round us, as if in play, and then barking and biting at our legs. My companion, although a strong and resolute man, was alarmed, and said the dog was going mad. I told him not to be frightened, for it was only a fit, which dogs were subject to after they had had the distemper. Thinking the fit would soon be over, I pulled off my coat and caught the dog up in it, intending

to carry him to some water, which I saw near me, but I could not hold him long, and as he began foaming at the mouth and struggling violently to bite, I was puzzled what to do with him, being without gloves. My companion, seeing me much excited, then took the dog from me, and tried to hold him, but he could not do so, and he begged me to let him kill him, as the dog had bitten him in the hand. "No," I said, "you shall not kill him, or we shall be fancying ourselves going mad, and the very idea will be enough to make us miserable for some time to come. Let him go at once." Away he went, like a shot out of a gun, as far as our eyes could follow him on the open moor, and we lost sight of him. "There," said my companion, "I suppose you are satisfied, sir, that the dog is gone mad." "No," I replied, "I am not at all satisfied about it, and more than that, I hope to satisfy you, before the day is over, that such is not the case." I then went down immediately to a small hamlet, which lay under the hills, got some hot water, and fomented the man's hand, and then applied a strong mustard poultice, which I changed once or twice, and we were, after some refreshment, a little more composed. I then begged my companion to go quietly home. "Pray, sir," he said, "what may you be going to do on these mountains alone!" "Why," I said, "my friend, I shall walk these hills, and search the ravines as long as I can see, or until I find the dog, if it is till midnight." "Then, sir," he said, "I shall go with you; I don't care much about this scratch, and I should like to know the fate of the dog, and if you do not think he was mad we shall find him." We accordingly made a circuit of the country, making inquiries of every man we met with, but no

tidings could we hear of the missing animal. At six o'clock in the evening we were on our homeward track, and called at a keeper's house to know if he had seen or heard anything of him; still no tidings. I then determined, although pretty well tired, to go again to the very spot where we had lost him, and search the ravines, although my companion was very much averse to this proceeding, and he told me afterwards he was afraid of finding him. We walked and searched for two hours more, when in going down a ravine, whistling and calling the dog by name, his head suddenly appeared above the heather and gorse, close to the side of the stream. He had fallen in his fit down the steep bank into the water below, which had restored him to his senses; he crawled out into the heather, and there laid for nearly eight hours. He was quite recovered, but stiff and frightened.

Now, had this occurred in a thickly populated district, the dog would most probably have bitten other animals whilst the fit was upon him, or any one he met in his way, and would unquestionably have been destroyed as a mad dog. I reached my quarters about ten o'clock at night, gave the dog a dose of calomel, and made him up a bed in the corner of my bedroom, leaving the door partially open for him to go down stairs if he liked. When I got up in the morning I found the dog had been down stairs, jumping round the servant girl, and frightening the landlady as well. From what I heard from my companion of the day before, a consultation had been held by the village gossips and the landlady, and it had been resolved *nem. con.* that my dog was certainly mad, and ought to be destroyed. My worthy hostess soon made her appearance, and urged me to destroy him

at once. To this I gave a flat denial, laughed at her fears, and told her that, for the satisfaction of the man that had been bitten, as well as my own, the dog should not be touched by her or any one else, but I did not afterwards trust him out of my sight day or night. In a few days the dog was quite well again.

I have been rather particular in this case, to satisfy the nervous and timid that a dog may exhibit all the appearances without being in the least affected by *rabies canina*. I will now relate some cases of decided hydrophobia which occurred among my own hounds some few years since. There was a large yard dog confined in the stable yard by a long chain to a box; but I had given directions that he should always be let loose two or three times a week at least, whilst I was absent from home. I have reason to think this was not attended to, and perhaps water not given to him regularly every day, as I had ordered. The day I returned the dog had broken loose, and bitten some of the loose hounds about the place. My whipper-in, being a sensible man, had caught him and shut him up in a place by himself, and immediately brought me the pleasing intelligence that he believed the dog mad, and he could not tell what mischief had been done. Singular enough this dog, after biting other dogs, rushed up to one of my children, who was walking out, and tried to lick his hand. He was a great favourite with the child, who, seeing him covered with foam and dirt, pushed him off, saying, "Get away, Nep, you are so dirty." The dog left him immediately, and jumped into a pond near. A few hours after he was taken up by the whipper-in, and confined in an outhouse. To prevent accidents some of the tiles were taken off the

roof, and food and water let down in buckets. Nothing, however, would he touch after the first day, and on the third he died raving mad, having torn everything to pieces within his reach. For safety, all the loose dogs about the place were shut up or destroyed, but I had still an idea that he might have bitten some of the young hounds through the railings, as they were generally out in the green-yard. So it proved. We watched them carefully, and two of them soon showed symptoms of *rabies*. They were removed directly, placed in a loose box, and died in three days afterwards. Others soon followed, and I then sent off for a very clever surgeon in the neighbourhood, who was fond of the chase, and whom I had before consulted on the distemper. As soon as he arrived I told him the circumstances, and that he would probably have many patients to try experiments on. He shook his head, and said he was afraid he could do no good. To commence, however, we dissected the two dogs which had died. In the stomach we found only sticks and straw, and the brain exhibited no appearance of inflammation, which we had expected.

"Now, Doctor," I said, "let me introduce you to your living patients." "Well," he said, "I think I must decline that honour; I never had any very great desire to walk into a tiger's den, but I should take the tiger's for choice in preference to going into a den of mad dogs." "Come," I said, "Doctor, don't be nervous; but if you won't venture in, I will, and you shall hold the door outside." We went, therefore, to the door, with the whipper-in, but the moment he opened it, and shewed his face, both the hounds flew at the door like savages. "This will never do," said the Doctor, "take your gun

and shoot them at once, or we shall have mischief done." Such advice did not suit my humour just then, and I confess I was guilty of a sort of fool-hardiness common in our youthful days, and which prompts us to do acts which we should repent in cooler moments. I wished, moreover, to try experiments, as I feared the whole pack might go mad, and they were very valuable. "Well," I said, "I have a strong impression that these hounds, knowing me well, will not bite me if they can help it; at any rate I will try the experiment. I therefore, put on two pairs of gloves, took a short thick stick under my arm, and, notwithstanding all the doctor and my man could say to the contrary, opened the door, leaving them outside, and walked boldly in. Their eyes glared fiercely as they advanced to meet me, but I called them by name, went up, and began talking to them in my usual tones, and patted them on the head. They appeared to know me quite well, wagged their tails, and then lay down sulkily in the corner. Satisfied so far that I could now give them medicine, without much fear of their biting me, I left the den and retired with the doctor to consult what to prescribe. The result of our experiments, and other remarks, I must leave to conclude in another letter.

LETTER V.

To resume the subject of *rabies canina*. After having locked the door, the doctor and myself returned to the house, to deliberate upon the best course to pursue with our mad patients. "Well," he said, "I can prescribe, but I tell you my candid opinion, that all the medicine in the world will not cure them, and *still* I advise you to give them a dose of powder and shot, as the best and shortest recipe." "This I have told you I shall not do," was my reply. "Very well," he said, "now there is another difficulty. You have heard, I dare say, of one taking a horse to water, &c." "Yes," I replied, "I think I have heard that story once in my life, if not oftener." "There, then," he said, "we shall be foiled, for I see your whipper-in is no great favourite, and I question whether any man of common sense (putting yourself and him out of the question, as I consider you both bordering on insanity) would undertake such a job—in short, you could not ask a man to run such a risk." "I am quite of your opinion, doctor; and as one of the fools cannot do it, the other must—so now to business."

His prescription was from ten to twenty drops of laudanum (according to the violence and frequency of the convulsions,) three times a day, which I gave them. I had some strong broth made with sheeps' heads, the meat stewed with it, of which they would take a little

occasionally, but with great difficulty in swallowing it. The laudanum had the effect of reducing the paroxysms after the first day, and by its continual use the dogs became listless and drowsy. On the fourth day, however, I found them dead, but so quietly had they died that they were curled up as if asleep, and had gone off without a struggle. Several others were seized and treated in a similar manner, with doses of laudanum and morphine, but with the same result. I then tried prussic acid, beginning with four drops and going up to twenty. This powerful medicine had a most decided effect in alleviating the paroxysms more quickly than laudanum, but nothing could arrest the progress of the disease. All my patients sunk gradually, but died without convulsions; nature appeared completely worn out.

I had now lost fourteen hounds by this terrible disease, all young, strong, and healthy, only a few days before. For a week no new cases appeared, and we began to think we had nothing more to fear. The whole pack had been, of course, well watched, and Epsom salts, with other alteratives, administered. A month passed, and another without any symptoms again appearing, and my whipper-in and myself were congratulating ourselves, thinking all danger was now past. Just, however, nine weeks after its first appearance, as we were feeding the hounds, a young dog chopped at his food in the trough in an unusual manner. I always attended at the feeding hours, and called the hounds in by name myself. At once my attention was rivetted on this hound. I called for a pair of couples, put them quickly round his neck, and told the whipper-in to shut him up immediately by himself. "Why, Sir," he said, "what's the matter with

him?" "Only, this," I said, "that he will be raving mad to-morrow morning"—and so he was. This was, however, the last case that appeared, and but for my quick detection of the slight alteration of manner in this dog, when feeding, the whole pack must have inevitably been destroyed, as he would, no doubt, have bitten most of them during the night, or early in the morning.

The thing that alarmed me most, however, was the feeder, being bitten quite through the wrist by this dog. He was in the habit of going about the kennel with his arm quite naked up to the shoulder, although I had often cautioned him about it. The whipper-in came running to me directly, to say that the feeder had been bitten through and through on his naked arm. A fearful wound it was, and bled profusely. This I encouraged by warm salt and water, applied as long as I could get any blood to flow. I then made him suck the wound, and when dry I put some lunar caustic immediately into it. The man was greatly alarmed at first, but I succeeded in soothing him to a certain extent, made him go home, and gave him a strong dose of calomel. A doctor was sent for directly, who said I had done quite right, and he could do nothing more except cut out the part bitten or cauterize it. I told him in my opinion the cutting out of the part would be useless, and I thought the caustic I had put into the wound would produce sufficient inflammation and suppuration; and so it did, for a fearful arm he had the next day. We then kept on with drawing poultices, and other ointments, until the wound was healed, which took some time. He had calomel and alteratives continually, but having set his mind upon a good sea dipping, I saw he would not be satisfied with-

out it, and I accordingly sent him down with a friend, and between him and the boatman he was nearly drowned. The dog by which he had been bitten died mad.

This man lived in my service several years afterwards, was married, and returned to his native village. I saw nothing of him until about eight years had elapsed, when he again came to work for me. He was then much altered, perhaps from hard work and hard living, and had become weak in body and almost silly in mind. I gave him a cottage to live in, and made him as comfortable as I could. His health, however, gradually declined, and just nine years after he had been bitten he died. Those who attended him at the last said he died in fits, and barked like a dog. I cannot vouch for this as a fact, but his wife is still living, and the man who sat up with him at night. During the four years he lived with me after being bitten he was as usual, but I made him take alteratives at the return of the season when he had been bitten. Should it be really the case that this man died from the effects of the bite inflicted nine years previously (and this fact could be set at rest by the examination of those who attended him in his last illness), two points will be established; one, that the virus does remain in the system for a length of time without being exhibited; the other, that the disease may be prevented breaking out, by the periodical use of medicines. I should think also very much depended upon the nature of the wound, whether only skin deep, and whether inflicted on the open hand and arm or through the clothes. In cases of this superficial nature I think the actual cautery (if much blood does not flow) used immediately, and then drawing poultices and stimulating ointments would effect a cure.

Dogs are very subject to canker in the ear, which if not speedily cured will cause deafness ; and I have known it break out when neglected into sores all over the ears, head, and neck. Spaniels and Newfoundland dogs are more subject to this than other dogs. Give from two to four grains of calomel at night, and some Epsom salts in the morning ; afterwards sulphur, two or three times a week. An ounce of sugar of lead, dissolved in a quart of rose water or rain water, makes a good lotion, and if persevered in for a few days will effect a cure. Shake the bottle well before using it, then warm one or two teaspoonsful of the liquid, and gently insert it into the ear.

When dogs are affected by the red mange I commence with bleeding and a dose of calomel afterwards, then give a teaspoonful of Æthiop's mineral every other night for a week, or a teaspoonful of powdered nitre, one of sulphur, and one of cream of tartar, mixed up together in lard. Dress with the following ointment: two parts of rape oil, one of spirits of turpentine, a small quantity of soft soap dissolved with the turpentine, and a sufficient quantity of sulphur to make it as thick as cream. For swellings or sore breasts in bitches, which often arise from neglect when their puppies are removed, the following is an excellent recipe, and will draw to a head as well as heal : a spoonful of honey, one of flour, one of sweet oil, one of weak white wine, and an egg, yolk and white. Put these all together in a saucepan over the fire, and keep stirring it *one way* all the time till it is thick. Use it as a poultice *warm* twice a day till the swelling breaks, dress with it in the same manner till the wound is perfectly cleansed ; then spread the same *cold* as a salve on

white leather, and use it as a plaster till the wound is healed. This is a most excellent recipe for boils or swellings in man and beast, which require to be brought to a head and healed. For bad cuts or bites, fomenting first with some warm liquor from the flesh copper, and a small quantity of salt dissolved in it, is the safest and surest way to ensure a cure; and this alone, with the dog's tongue, will be sufficient in many cases. In others Fryar's Balsam, with an equal proportion of brandy, may be applied.

In flinty countries, where hounds' feet are much bruised, I have known huntsmen adopt the barbarous practice of cutting the ball of the foot, by which means the hound is totally incapacitated from working for some days, at least. Foment first with warm water or liquor until the inflammation subsides, and then apply some spermaceti or elder ointment; on the following day alum or salt water to harden the foot.

For sprains or rheumatism the following is a good recipe:—3oz. of spirits of wine, 4oz. of spirits of white lavender, 4oz. of oil of organum, and $\frac{1}{2}$ oz. of camphor.

The best food for hounds is unquestionably good old oatmeal, a stock of which should be kept in hand. The best time to lay it in for the ensuing season is about Christmas, when it is generally cheapest. The Irish and Scotch is considered superior to the English. If pressed down in casks, or placed in good binns, it will keep well for a twelvemonth or two years. I have tried wheat meal, Indian corn, and barley. These may do in the summer months, but hounds cannot work upon them in the hunting season as upon oatmeal. No race of men are more hardy, or can do more work than the Scotch la-

bourers, who live chiefly upon this food ; and it has been ascertained that oats contain more muscular matter than wheat. The coarser the oatmeal is, the better ; it should be well boiled for an hour, stirring the while, to prevent its catching at the bottom of the copper. I had once a lazy feeder, who used to let the meal boil sometimes without stirring it, and the consequence was nearly fatal to himself, as from this neglect the copper burst, and scalded him severely. Other feeders I have known to keep pouring in oatmeal, until it is so thick that they can stir it no longer ; but this makes a sad hole in the master's pocket. A certain quantity should be given out daily, and I would recommend you to keep the key in your own pocket. One pound of good old oatmeal is sufficient for any middle-sized hound. Less will do with small hounds, when well boiled, with the addition of meat and broth. The thicker the pudding is made, the more liquor it will take when being mixed up.

It is the custom in some establishments to take all horses, dead or alive, diseased or healthy, which are brought to the kennel. I need scarcely observe that, if you wish to keep your hounds healthy, you must not feed them upon unwholesome food ; and I would recommend you not to give any horses which have died of disease to your hounds. Purchase the horses for the kennel, and keep them for a week or two before they are killed. In some localities dog horses are scarce, in others almost too plentiful ; the average price is from fourteen shillings to a pound. Some huntsmen, when flesh is scarce, give graves ; I would nearly as soon give poison. It is the most foul, heating food that ever was destined for the stomach of a dog. The insides of sheep,

well washed, and afterwards boiled until quite tender, are not only a good substitute for horseflesh, but better and more nutritious food than half the horses which are used in the kennel.

The huntsmen or feeders in large establishments having the perquisite of the dog horses, *i. e.*, skin, bones, &c., are often induced to take in horses unfit for food, and in greater numbers than necessary. The skin of a horse is worth from six to eight shillings, the bones from two shillings to half-a-crown, and the hair something also. The huntsman of a scratch pack of harriers once told me he kept his hounds for next to nothing. Living in the neighbourhood of two large towns, in a coal district, he could buy a dog horse for about ten shillings. The skin he sold himself in the market, for which he got from 7s. to 8s. and the bones and hair made 2s. more, so that the flesh cost him nothing, and upon this alone, during the greater part of the year, his hounds subsisted. This was a very economical way of keeping a pack of hounds, but my brother fox hunters will hardly agree that a pack of foxhounds should be similarly managed. Raw flesh, it is well known, will soon make a very poor hound fat, but you cannot work upon it in the hunting season. I have, however, often given it to bad feeders and old hounds to improve their condition, when not required to work.

In the summer the feeding hour should be rather late, say four or five o'clock; hounds will then be more likely to remain quiet during the night. I have before remarked that I always gave my hounds a little thin lap in the morning about eight o'clock. When feeding, there is no necessity for either huntsman or whipper-in using a whip. I have often seen huntsmen, and I believe it is

their usual practice, to feed by the whip as much or more than by the voice. You see them standing at the door, pointing with the whip to each hound as he is called in; and hounds, in their eagerness for their dinner, with their eyes fixed upon the huntsman and his whip, often mistake a sign made for another as intended for themselves, and get a good cut for their pains. I had always some very thin switches or light hazel sticks, not thicker than my finger, kept in the feeding house; but never allowed a whip to be used at dinner hours. I threw the door open after looking well over the lot of hounds I was about to feed, and then called each hound by name distinctly as he was to come in; if one rushed in unbidden he was ordered back again, and if he did not obey, the whipper-in or feeder gave him a gentle reminder with the switch. Hounds are very sensible animals, and soon understand what is required of them, if their master is quiet and steady with them, and does not get out of temper. In Beckford's time, huntsmen used to flog their hounds whilst feeding them to teach them their names, and he quaintly observes, "that if they had not always a belly-full one way, they seldom failed to get it the other." The confusion I have also witnessed at feeding time, in some kennels, was disgusting. I shall only observe, that any man who cannot feed his hounds without knocking them about with the whip, frightening the timid and driving the others in and over the troughs, is not fit to hold the situation of huntsman. It is not my wish to exact too much or more than I think any man of moderate common sense can attain to, but nothing can be done with dogs or animals of any kind in the way of instruction unless common sense is combined with quietness and

cool decision, without violence or any exhibition of temper. The best plan for most huntsmen to pursue (and it is one I invariably adopt myself) is to feed only five or six couples of hounds at a time. The feeding troughs having covers with hinges, can be kept on or let down at pleasure, and the food will remain warm enough during the whole time of feeding. I generally allowed an hour for feeding the whole pack, and walking them out, and it ought not to be done in less time.

LETTER VI.

THE young hounds should be well over the distemper, and accustomed to go without couples, before they are rounded; the loss of blood from this operation is sometimes excessive, and I once lost several young hounds from their being rounded before thoroughly recovered from the effects of distemper. It should not be deferred too long, however, and a cool day should be chosen for the purpose. The hounds should be fed early in the morning, or they will become sick and faint from loss of blood, and perhaps eat nothing afterwards on that day.

Preparation for the hunting season now commences. The young hounds will be kept separate from the pack until about a month before the campaign opens. In the meantime they are supposed to have received their proper education. When for the first time taken among deer, it is safer to have them in couples, to prevent mischief. If you have no deer yourself, permission may be easily obtained from your neighbours to allow your young hounds to exercise an hour or two once or twice a week in their parks. They will soon become accustomed to them; and the huntsman, by crossing them over the scent, will instruct them not to stoop to it. The scent of the deer is the sweetest of all game, and I have often seen young hounds, even so late as March, when they ought

to be quite steady, flash away at a wild deer, although they would never think of running them in a park. It was a general rule with the late Mr. Ward, whose hounds were proverbially steady, never to allow, even in the hunting season, more than four or five couples of young hounds to go into the forest at a time, or into any coverts where deer were known to resort. Prevention is better than cure, and every precaution should be taken to keep a pack of foxhounds steady to their own game. I remember seeing a tame doe in Mr. Ward's kennel, which fed out of the same trough with the hounds. I had also, when I first commenced keeping foxhounds, tame rabbits and a hare which lived in the kennel with the hounds. I had a great deal of trouble with these hounds, coming as they did from all kennels, to prevent them killing the rabbits, but by my constant attention and watching, they soon found out that they were forbidden fruit, and the rabbits and hounds became friends. Having at that time little to do, I tried many experiments with hounds, and I could make them do almost anything I told them. If any of my readers imagine this was effected by the whip or harsh means, I beg to undeceive them—no severity was ever had recourse to. Others may say it was only waste of time and unnecessary, and that hounds can be made quite steady enough without any such trouble. This I admit; but my situation at that time was a peculiar one. I had a lot of draft hounds got together from different kennels, with which I had to commence a new country unaccustomed to foxhounds, and with scarcely a fox in it.

There were many large game preservers, and one in particular, who had some very fine coverts in the heart

of the county. When I called upon him, and asked his permission to draw his coverts for a fox, he appeared astonished at my impudence, and said he was quite sure there was no such animal as a fox there, and he could not allow his pheasants and hares to be driven about and killed by my rough dogs. I told him my hounds were much better bred than he supposed, and were too polite to touch his hares, if requested not to do so. Upon this point he was very incredulous, saying, that although my hounds might not run his hares, they would chop them up if they came in their way. "Well, Sir," I said, "I will make an agreement with you, and it is this, that if one hound I bring with me kills a hare, or even snaps at one, I will never ask to draw your coverts again, and you yourself shall be judge." This proposal seemed to tickle his fancy, and he at once agreed to it, thinking, I have no doubt, that he should get rid of me and the hounds too. A day was fixed for a private rehearsal, and I accordingly made my appearance before his house with about sixteen couples of hounds. The old gentleman (being a greyhound breeder himself) came down to look them over, seemed pleased with their appearance, and ordered his pony round to accompany me to the scene of action, which was some small coverts with high under-wood (always a ticklish place for riot), and literally swarming with hares. I saw, by a quiet smile exchanged between the master and head-keeper, that they considered this to be the first and last appearance of my hounds on this hitherto forbidden ground. They had laid a trap for me, by taking me first to this hollow covert, but they were, like some other clever people, caught themselves. When ready for action, I coolly asked the old gentleman

how long he wished me to take in drawing this particular wood, as I would keep the hounds there as long as he pleased, having intended them to be at his own disposal the whole day. "Not longer than necessary," he replied. As soon as the hounds were thrown in, the wood seemed almost alive with game; I never saw before or since such a quantity in so small a space—the hares rushed about like mad in all directions, running against each other and the hounds, and one or two screamed out. "Halloo," said the under-keeper, who was with me, "they have killed one or two hares, I'm sure." "No," I said, "they have not, it is only your bellows-headed brutes trying to knock my hounds off their legs, and then crying out because they are hurt." After searching in every direction, no dead hare, however, could be found, and when I had let the hounds run over the whole covert, every corner of it, I called them together, and brought them all out, for their faces to be inspected, that any marks of blood might be seen if they had offended. The old gentleman appeared satisfied, and the keepers looked blank. "Well," he said, "you have won the day." "No, Sir," I replied, "I have only won half-an-hour yet—the day is yours, and your keepers may catch us tripping before it is dark yet." "No," he said, "that shall not be, I like both your conduct and your hounds too. Take your hounds home now, and, if you have nothing better to do, and can dispense with bachelor's fare, come and dine with me this evening." I did so, and from that time an intimacy subsisted between us until the day of his death, which was deplored by all his acquaintances, rich and poor, since, notwithstanding his partiality for game, he was as kind and good-hearted a man as ever lived.

Permission to hunt his coverts was a passport also to others, and at public coursing meetings and other places he always gave me and the hounds a good character.

Whether hounds are stricly steady or not, in these days, is of little consequence. Fox hunting is now established upon a different footing. Public opinion with some men is everything, and there is many a man, who wishes fox hunters and hounds at the bottom of the sea, obliged to meet them with a smile, and openly give orders to his keepers to preserve foxes. His secret orders are another affair.

Young hounds cannot have too much exercise; they should go several miles a day, in every direction round the kennel, to make them acquainted with the country; through towns and villages which lie in their way, and to all the places of meeting. They may also draw plantations and small coverts where hares abound, or be taken through warrens. They should be crossed also over the track of hares, when they are not in view. By such means young hounds may be made handy and tractable before hunting commences, and the better they are instructed, the less trouble they will give afterwards. Begin cub-hunting as early as you can. Draw off about twelve couples of your old and staunch hounds, more if they can be spared, and put them and the young together, to form a pack. This is far preferable to putting a few couples at a time into the body of the pack. By this arrangement you will prevent the one and two season hunters from being again unsettled, and you will possess two good packs instead of an indifferent one. The old steady hounds will by their example soon teach the young what they are to do, and by Christmas this pack will become as

steady as the other. It will also save your three and four seasoned hounds from summer work. I generally began cub-hunting early in August; in some countries you may begin earlier. Take your young hounds the first time to an easy place, where there is a good litter of foxes, and not much riot. The whipper-in should first examine all the earths, to see that they are properly stopped, for they are often opened by badgers and fox stealers, after the earth-stopper has left the covert. Then throw your hounds quietly in and let them work themselves; don't be in a hurry, and allow no hallooing and bustling. Young foxes, at this season of the year, are weak, and easily brought to hand; there is no occasion, therefore, for a huntsman to be in a hurry. If there are rides in the coverts, where the young hounds can occasionally catch a view of their game, you may give them a turn every now and then; but if your hounds are well bred, they will generally join with the cry after the first ten minutes, and in that case they are better left alone. The whippers-in will be so stationed as to check them from running improper game, and that is all that is required of them. Allow of no hallooing and cracking of whips, which will serve only one purpose—to frighten the young hounds and disgust the old. When a hound is running riot, I have often heard a whipper-in hallooing with all his might, and cracking his whip, and I can conceive little Mischief safe in the high covert, chuckling within herself and saying, "All that is very fine, Mr. Jack, but I don't care two straws for your cracked voice, and I shall have my fun out."

Now, I have known a quiet, sensible man go down at once to where the riot was, without saying a word, wait

quietly his opportunity until little Mischief thought the coast was clear, and had come out into shorter wood, and then pounce upon her like lightning, with one or two cuts of the lash. Instead of rating her at the top of his voice, with a considerable quantity of *damson pie* in addition, he would merely tell Mischief to leave that fun alone, for the next time she did it he would break half the bones in her skin. I have known such a whipper-in, when the young hounds were all in a charm, running riot together, sit as quietly on his horse as if nothing was the matter, until he saw they were in his power; he would then dash at once in among them, like a hawk into a flock of birds. I have heard him, also, when he could not get at them, telling them what they might expect when they met. His usual rate, "What next, I wonder, hey, you mischievous curs?" in his strong, angry voice, was generally a sufficient hint, and all were quiet. He never struck a hound unnecessarily, nor mistook Jupiter for Juno, and did not very often get out of temper; but when he did strike a hound, it was to such purpose that he did not soon forget it. His look, too, and manner, when not pleased, were too decided to be mistaken, but I never heard him crack his whip once in a week.

An idle, stupid fellow, with a good voice, is one of the greatest nuisances that a pack of hounds can be exposed to. He fancies he has always something to do, and something to say; with not sufficient tact to catch hounds when at riot, and punish them in the act, he generally waits his opportunity to vent his ill-humour upon them when out of covert, or perhaps when assembled round the huntsman. Such a fellow will do much more mis-

chief than good: draft him at once. A whipper-in has no right to strike a hound out of cover, much less when flying to his huntsman for protection. *His* presence ought to be his security. If young hounds will not come out of cover when called by the huntsman, it is the business of the whipper-in to go into the covert and drive them out; not stand outside hallooing, that his musical voice may be heard.

In cub hunting there is no necessity to eat up a whole litter of cubs at once, as I knew a famous Leicestershire huntsman boast of doing. One or two at most are quite sufficient to kill in one day. Young foxes will often get tired altogether, after the hounds have been running and changing them for an hour or two. There is no merit in killing them then; therefore, when your hounds have caught one, after an hour's work, take them home. That is quite sufficient for the first day. After the young hounds have been out two or three times, and begin to know their game, you may then take them to large woodlands, where they will have more work to do. The more they scratch their faces, the better they will turn out in the end. By hunting the large coverts during the months of August and September, you will not only break your young hounds in, but foxes will fly from them in the season and give you better chases. Every litter of foxes, however, should have a turn before October. It will teach them to get out of the way of shooters and their dogs, and make them seek other places of refuge.

It has been asserted by some masters of foxhounds, that main earths being generally known to poachers as well as keepers and earth stoppers, are unsafe places for

cubs to be bred in. They are, however, seldom laid up in such places. The vixen generally deposits her young in some bye earth or large rabbit pipe, away from the main earths, to which, when a month or two old, they will often remove. Foxes which have been bred underground will find earths somewhere, or use drains, from which they may be much more easily taken than from a large head of main earths. Stopping up these large places of refuge for the whole season, as suggested by some writers on fox hunting, is, in my humble opinion, a very objectionable plan; your foxes will then go wide away into your neighbour's country, or seek shelter in less secure places. The larger a head of earths is the better. They should *all* and *always* be kept open, unless when required to be stopped the night before hunting, and invariably be opened again the same evening, and every pipe cleaned out.

The earth-stopper or keeper who has the charge of these main earths should be well paid for his trouble in looking after them, and it is the business of the whipper-in to pay them a visit occasionally, to see that no tricks are played. It is no such easy matter to get a fox out of a strong head of earths. Poachers do bolt them into purse nets with a good dog, and sometimes a large net is set up all round the earths with sticks and bells; but it takes time to do all these things, and a good earth-stopper should visit the earths once a day, either going or returning from his work. A man who has a large head of earths to attend to ought to receive five shillings at least for each stopping out at night, and half-a-crown for putting them to in the morning. As all our sport depends so much upon this work being done properly,

it is good policy, if no better motive exists, to reward these men handsomely, as it is in their power not only to pay themselves by selling foxes, but also to spoil a day's sport by carelessness or inattention. Much will of course depend upon the country you hunt, and the master of the coverts, whether he is at heart a real well-wisher to foxhounds or not. In some countries the fees to keepers and earth-stoppers form a very heavy item in the expenses of the establishment, which the master has to bear. In others a separate fund is raised for this purpose. In some clay districts, such as the Roothings of Essex, foxes are often bred above ground, in old hollow stools, or laid up in gorse coverts. These foxes are always the best and straightest runners, trusting to their stoutness and knowledge of country to beat their pursuers.

There are three breeds of foxes common in Great Britain. The large light-coloured greyhound fox, generally found in the north of England, Scotland, and Wales, also on the wild hills of Devonshire, and in some other counties; the bulldog fox, dark coloured, with a large head; and the cur, a small red fox, to which I think we are indebted to our Gallic friends the other side of the Channel. There are of course mixed breeds, to be found in every county, but these three are, I think, or were, distinct species. The greyhound fox has almost disappeared, where some years ago he was well known, and the large importations of French foxes have certainly proved a very poor substitute. They cannot or will not run, and will lie down when the least blown in the open, until the hounds are upon them. They are also always prowling about the farm-yard, and do more mischief than they are worth.

When commencing a new country many years ago, I obtained some foxes from Germany—and a fine lot of cubs they were—in colour and size resembling the old greyhound fox, but much thicker in their coats and larger in their heads. They came over from Frankfort in the bottom of an old boat, a lid being made to it, full of air-holes, and they reached me more than one hundred miles from London in good health and condition. After having kept them a few days in a large airy barn, I had them taken into the best part of my country to some large earths, where I appointed a man to look after them and feed them regularly every night with rabbits, at nine o'clock. These my whipper-in had to carry twice a week in a sack, fifteen miles, from the 1st of June to the 1st of September.

Young foxes, if turned down in a strange place, require regular feeding every night till they can catch their own prey, which is not quite so soon as some people imagine. It is quite true that young foxes in their natural state feed upon beetles and mice, but cubs turned down, if not regularly fed, will wander away anywhere, and be soon starved to death or killed by sheep dogs. Should they, however, escape such a fate, and contrive to exist, it is ten to one but they become mangy, and ruin half your good foxes. The mange in foxes is very different to the mange in dogs; with the former it invariably proves fatal and is very contagious. Of the duties of huntsmen and whippers-in in my next; what they *should*, and what they *should not* be.

LETTER VII.

A HUNTSMAN who is to be entrusted with the chief direction and management of the pack, which is very much the custom in the present day, I need scarcely remark, should be a man of undoubted good character, and strictly sober. He should be young, active, and intelligent, with natural talent for his business; quick, without ever being in a hurry; quiet, but decisive. A good horseman he of course must be. This does not mean a hard *harey starey* rider, but one who, without distressing his horse, can always be where he ought to be—with his hounds. If he has a good voice so much the better; but a noisy fellow is my abomination. He should be a good temper, and quiet with his hounds, giving them time always to make their own cast good, before he attempts to interfere. We must make all due allowances for the excitement inseparably connected with a fox chase, and it is therefore more requisite to have a man with a cool head at that most critical period, the first check. I have seen huntsmen so flurried at an unexpected check, that they were all abroad, catching hold of the hounds in their hurry, without allowing them time to make their own cast, and carrying them off at once, to make a scientific display of their miscalled genius. Others, who are jealous of being overtaken when having a good start, will commit the same blunder by over haste, and in try-

ing to beat the field only beat themselves. More haste less speed.

I once heard of a very dashing huntsman, who hunted a pack of hounds near one of our learned Universities, and whose field was often greeted by the sons of Alma Mater. These young gentlemen being out for the day, and requiring a good gallop to digest their Latin and Greek, generally tipped the huntsman pretty freely, and they had their burst accordingly, for Joe would give them a rattling cast forward when the scent failed, or, saying he heard a halloo, would go full tilt to the next covert, two or three miles off.

We cannot put old heads on young shoulders; and young huntsmen the first season will often commit all kinds of blunders. Their situation is a novel one, and, naturally enough, they try to exhibit their genius. This desire to distinguish themselves will generally cool down, or it ought to do so, after the novelty has worn off. It is very laudable to endeavour to gain the good opinion of their master and the gentlemen of the country by the display of every talent they may possess; but this may be carried too far. A conceited huntsman is a monstrous nuisance. An observant man will soon find out that a good pack of hounds know their business better than he can teach them, and will do well to allow the hounds to display their genius before he displays *his*. It has been asserted by high authority that a pack of hounds, if left to themselves, would seldom kill a fox. My opinion is that a really good pack of hounds would seldom miss one. Everything depends upon the system pursued, and the education of the pack. The present system of lifting hounds to halloos and over fallows naturally disposes

them to be indifferent about a bad scent. Expecting assistance either from a halloo or a cast forward, they will give themselves little trouble in working out the line of scent over bad ground, and I have seen them looking up at their huntsman, as much as to say, "There, we have done enough; now you must help us." Let these hounds change masters, and receive no assistance, they would soon put their noses down, and although at first make but a poor fight with a flying fox, they would soon work through difficulties, and learn to depend upon their own exertions. Well bred hounds will always get forward with the scent, and make the most of it when it is failing. A little assistance will go a long way, but it never should be given until absolutely required, which is very seldom.

It does not necessarily follow that a first-rate whipper-in will make a first-rate huntsman—very often the reverse. A really good whipper-in sometimes makes a wretched huntsman. Their duties are widely different, and their genius or talents are to be employed in a very different direction. I knew a capital whipper-in who refused to accept a huntsman's situation, and his reason was not a bad one. "I have been now," he said, "many years in my present place as first whipper-in, and am proud to say have given satisfaction to my master and the gentlemen, and know my business tolerably well; but if I took a huntsman's place, and failed, which is very likely, I should not like to go back again to be whipper-in." This man reasoned rightly, and knew himself better, perhaps, than he then thought. It so happened that the establishment in which he had acted so satisfactory a part as whipper-in was soon afterwards

broken up by the death of his master. The huntsman retired, and being very strongly urged by the new master and the country gentlemen to hunt the hounds, he reluctantly complied, but his forebodings came true; he failed in his new situation as huntsman, and after a year's trial gave it up in disgust, and retired upon his earnings. This is not a solitary case.

It has been asserted by Beckford, that a first whipper-in should be able to hunt the hounds occasionally—in fact, be a second huntsman. This I admit should be the case, for a whipper-in, who has had many years' experience, and been looking on at the game so long, must be a monstrous goose not to handle the cards at a pinch, when the huntsman might, from accident or illness, be unable to be at his post.

I have known, however, a good deal of mischief done in a very short space of time by one of these would-be huntsmen; it happened with my own hounds. From an accident I was laid up for about a month in the heart of the season, and of course my first whip was obliged (not very reluctantly, I fancied), to fill my place. He was one of the best men in that capacity I ever had, or almost ever knew, but too hasty and impatient to make a good huntsman, before he had cooled down a little. The hard riders of my field were very fond of him, and in high glee (so much for gratitude) when they heard of my being laid on the shelf for some time, and master Jem to play first fiddle. "Now," they said, "we shall have it all our own way, with the Squire on his back, and Jem with the horn; won't we have some clipping bursts, and no hold hards, with a kill in the open, after a twenty-five minutes!" I gave my whipper-in certain advice as to

his behaviour with the hounds, but I could see he was rather too much prepossessed with his own anticipated grand performances to pay much attention to it, and he left my room for his first essay, with grand ideas of what he should do. Evening came, and Jem to make his report, but no fox's head. Scent was bad, and the hounds would not attend to him. "Never mind," I said, "this is only what I expected; better luck is coming."

The next fixture was in our best grass country, with a good flying fox or two in it. Having cautioned him again not to be in a hurry with the hounds when they came to check, Jem set out on his second trial. When he returned it was very late, and, as I expected, he had had a good day. Upon his appearance in my room, I asked, "What sport?" "Oh, sir," he said, "we have had a capital run." "Well," I said, "and you have brought his head home this time, I hope." "No, sir, I am sorry to say I have not. We had a capital burst over the grass up to the hills, and were running into him, as everybody thought, in the open, when, after leaving the last hedge on the edge of the downs, the hounds suddenly threw up, and we could never hit upon him afterwards. I made a wide cast, but could not recover the scent, and I cannot think what became of him." "Well," I said, "I think I can. Whilst you were making your wide cast into the next parish, the fox being perhaps blown, had laid himself down in the ditch and gave you the slip, Master Jem; that's all about it." "Well, sir," he said, "I think you are right after all. We were rather hasty, I must confess, and some of the hard riding gentlemen would have it that the fox was forward; but I won't listen to them another time."

For a month Jem had it all his own way, but his high-wrought expectations were not realized. Few foxes' heads returned to the kennel door, so few that his fast friends began to enquire a little more after the old Squire's health. They had, however, occasionally a fair day or two, and upon one occasion the thing they had been expecting to have every day—a burst of twenty minutes, as hard as they could go, with a kill in the open. The whoops, I am told, were something extraordinary upon the accomplishment of this feat, but it ended in a row. One of Jem's fast friends, a sporting doctor, who always rode fast and furious, happening to beat Jem in pace, was up first, and jumping off his horse, dashed in among the hounds for the brush, and began laying about him with his whip. This roused Jem's ire, who was second in the race, and perhaps on that account not in the best of humours, and he retaliated upon the doctor's shoulders. A fight would have taken place but for others coming up and interfering. The doctor was so irate, that he threatened to report Jem's conduct at head-quarters; but I heard nothing more of it, both being too much excited at the time, I believe, to know what they were about.

Towards the end of the month, calls from my sporting friends became rather more numerous, and several sat some time with me, seeming very anxious to know when I should be well enough to take the field again. "Oh!" I said, "in about another month; but you don't want me, you have Jem all to yourselves. By-the-bye," I said, "I have a strong idea that I shall find the hounds wonderfully improved." "Oh!" they said, "Jem is all very well, and a capital whipper-in, but, some how or

other, we don't get on quite so well as we thought, and we want you out again." Although not much flattered, I thought it necessary to make my appearance as soon as possible, and I did so immediately I could sit in the saddle. My first fixture was to draw some rather large woods, where there were plenty of foxes, and I was most cordially greeted by my expectant friends once more at the covert side, all so glad to see me. "How do ye do, old fellow—hope you're all right—can't do without you?" and all that sort of trash. I am too old a bird to be caught with chaff. We soon found, and had a brace or leash of foxes on foot. For the first twenty minutes or so the hounds rattled away as usual, but after that I saw two or three at a time stand out in the rides, when they came to a momentary check, and look about. As soon as the ground was rather foiled, more did the same thing, and presently the whole body came to a stand, with their heads well up. Then a halloo from Jem—at it again for a short time; then a scream from somebody else—to him again; so the thing went on for nearly an hour, and, I must confess, I was as sulky as a bear with a sore ear.

There were the same hounds in appearance I had been so proud of only a month before, and what were they then? Jem took pretty good care to be out of hearing distance, but I met with him at last. Just as I did so, another halloo from the top of the covert. "There, Sir," he said, "he is gone away at last." "No," I said, "he is not, at least not *my* fox, and now one word with you. I am huntsman to-day, not you; now mind what I say. The hounds shall not leave this covert until you hear *my horn outside*. They shall go to no halloa but mine, if ten foxes break covert; they shall be stopped

every time. These are my positive orders. You know your duty as whipper-in—do it." Jem, seeing how matters stood, murmured something about a good run spoilt, which I told him was my concern, and not his, and executed my orders. Still the screaming went on, as soon as any fox made his appearance at the edge of the wood, and being at one time in a ride very near the outside, I heard one man exclaim, "I'll be hanged if I don't halloo till he does come." In a moment I was outside, and riding up to this gentleman, I said, "Now, Sir, I am come, pray what do you want with me?" "All I have to say, Sir, is," he replied, "that a fox is gone over that field, and your whipper-in stopped the hounds, saying such were your orders." "Very true, Sir, such *are* my orders." "Then I suppose," he said, "you are going to keep the hounds in covert all day, and spoil our sport." "No," I replied, "I am not, although you and others have nearly spoilt my hounds by hallooing and driving for the last month. Yet, I may give you a run by-and-bye, if you have patience, but I will have no more hallooing. My hounds are running one fox, which I intend to stick to, and you are hallooing another." I returned to my business with the old fox, which I had seen several times before the hounds, and by riding with them through the wood high and low, I kept them at him, and we had it soon, all to ourselves, without another fox remaining. The scent improved, and finding his quarters too hot to hold him, the old fox at last broke away over a fine grass vale, and we ran into him in the open. My noisy friend directly came up, and said he was sorry he had offended me by hallooing, and thanked me at the same time for the run we had given him. "Now," I

said, "I will show you the fox you wished me to follow in the morning; he is only gone across a couple of fields into another large wood, where I think we shall get upon him again, and you will then see whether you or I know most about spoiling sport." We accordingly went to this covert, and soon got upon him, but, having had a tolerable dusting in the morning, he showed no disposition to try his old quarters again, even across two fields, and we soon disposed of him. Congratulations now poured in, and we went on satisfactorily after this day. Jem quietly settled down to his work as usual; in fact, I think he was not sorry to do so, his *debut* as huntsman not having quite satisfied either himself or friends.

After a few years more he obtained a first-rate place as huntsman, which he wished, however, to decline, and would have done so, but for my pressing and almost forcing him to accept it. The month's probation he had had with me was not lost time, for he had good sense enough to see the errors he had committed by over haste and excitement, and he is now huntsman in a large establishment, where, I think, he cannot fail to give satisfaction. There are, however, many first-rate whippers-in who know they are not likely to make huntsmen, and they show their sense by sticking to their own line of business. I have known many establishments where huntsman and head whip were both growing greyheaded together.

As I have before remarked, weight and height are or ought not to be of so much consideration. Character and talent are the first requisites. Unless a lad has naturally good abilities and a decided taste for that line of life, he will never, with all the instruction he may receive, turn out anything extraordinary. He must

also have decision of character and command of temper, with sober and industrious habits. In my time, I have had several pupils in this line, but only two ever turned out to my satisfaction. There are many temptations thrown in their way, and therefore, unless they have decision of character to resist them, they will certainly fail. I once wrote to the famous John Ward for the character of a whipper-in, who had left his service; his reply was in these words, and quite sufficient to satisfy me:—

“DEAR SIR,

“In reply to your letter, I beg to say, that if John B——n had been worth keeping I should not have parted with him.

“Yours truly,

“J. WARD.”

Whippers-in should be cleanly also, but not conceited. My father once cured the conceit of his whipper-in for a time, at least, in a very summary way. Jack was a spruce lad, but had rather too high an opinion of his good looks, and one fine morning, having a new and dandy pair of top-boots on, he could not keep his eyes off them. The governor told him to mind his business and not his new boots, or he would have them blacked over, tops and all, the next day; but it would not do. Jack had never been fitted so nicely before, and he could not help admiring them notwithstanding. The hounds were running in covert; Jack, galloping along on the outside with his legs stretched out and head down, at a sudden turn, came full tilt against the governor, who was riding in the contrary direction, and he would have unhorsed him, but my father, having caught a glimpse of Jack coming along, had prepared for the charge, and met him with such a facer from the double thong, that he knocked Jack clean out of the saddle, and spoilt his good looks for that day at least. This cooled Jack's

conceit for some time ; but, being a good looking youth, the ladies of our establishment below stairs did their best to spoil him.

Jack had also a rival, in the shape of a footman, who often tried to frighten him with stories about ghosts. Our house, being an old-fashioned structure, was of course haunted, as all such places are supposed to be. One dark winter's night, when Jack was doing up his horse after hunting, Mr. Thomas proposed to the fair ladies to try Jack's courage by exhibiting himself as a ghost at the stable door. He accordingly shrouded himself in a long flowing robe, as those worn in the East, for which purpose the table-cloth sufficed, and rubbing his face over with phosphorus, sallied forth to frighten Jack into fits. Arrived at the stable door, the ghost commenced a low moaning. Jack listened, but, as he told me afterwards, he could not make out at first where it came from. "The wind," thought Jack—another groan. "No," 'taint wind ; 'tis one of the horses in the other stable." Jack went to see, thinking he had got the fret. No, he was all right. "Well," thought Jack, "something outside it must be. I'll look out ; who's afraid?" Jack wasn't ; but certain ideas about ghosts did obtrude themselves notwithstanding, and I have a notion Jack was far from being easy in his mind on that score. Jack peeped cautiously out, saw something white, and quickly popped his head in again. "'Tis one at last, sure enough!" thought Jack, and his hair began to feel rather uncomfortably stiff on his head—in short, his hackles began to rise as his courage began to fall. "Well!" thought Jack, "this won't do at any rate. I must get out of the stable somehow, for it is near supper time, and I shall be laughed at by Mary. I'll have another peep."

Another groan, rather louder than before. "Come," says Jack, "matters is getting rather serious; something must be done." Jack didn't fancy opening the door by any means again, so he thought of the key-hole; looking through cautiously, he could only see something white, but at that precise moment the ghost could not suppress a chuckle, to think how he was frightening poor Jack. "Well," thinks Jack, "I didn't know that ghosts laughed as well—I have it now, 'tis that fool Thomas. Well, Mr. Thomas, I'll see if I don't make you groan to some purpose presently;" so Jack takes hold of the twitch, a short stick with a bit of cord at the end. "Now for my game." He accordingly opened the door very cautiously, as if afraid to look out, and the ghost, emboldened by success, popped his head in with a "boo!" "Take that for your boo, then," said Jack, and down came the twitch with all his might upon the ghost's head; a real groan followed, and down went Mr. Thomas, tablecloth and all. It was a settler. Jack dashed a bucket of water over him, to bring him too, and the discomfitted Thomas made his appearance at the supper table in a pitiable plight, and with a broken head into the bargain. Thus ended all about the ghost stories, and Jack rose in the estimation of the fair for his courage. This affair, however, rather increased Jack's conceit, and my father threatened to make out his travelling ticket more than once or twice. At last it *was* done, and poor Jack left us all, in sorrow. In despair he enlisted in a marching regiment, which embarked for India, and we never heard of or saw him again. Alas! poor Jack, how many a gay and gallant lad like thee, seduced by that phantom, Glory, has left his bones to moulder in a foreign land!

LETTER VIII.

EVERY man who has read Beckford must remember the anecdote of Will Crane, who swore at his whipper-in because he did not get forward when the head earths at Daventry were open. Many may think the huntsman to blame; but as it is the especial business of the whipper-in to carry out the orders about earth stopping, he must have known what earths were open and what stopped, and when a fox is taking a line for a well-known head of earths it is his duty to put forward to the place.

I have heard of various duties required of a first whip, but a famous Leicestershire Squire, who once hunted the Melton country, set his man to draw a gorse covert on foot. The hounds were not working to his satisfaction, and he hallooed out to his whipper-in, "Come Jack, get off, and scratch your legs a bit." For a second whipper-in it has been said that any lad will do who can smack a whip. The smacking a whip is the last accomplishment I should require in any young gentleman who aspired to the honour of distinguishing himself in the profession of the noble science. No greater nuisance can happen to a pack of hounds than a lad who has acquired the knack of cracking a whip well. He is perpetually seeking opportunities of displaying his skill, and old Boxer would as soon almost have to deal with a

rattle-snake. On foot he does not care much about the urchin, and gives him to understand by surly growls and bristles up that he had better keep his distance, but on horseback he is out of Boxer's reach, and is a perfect tyrant, flicking him in the legs when he wants to stop behind for certain purposes, and trying to ride over him into the bargain.

An old sportsman I knew well had a very good plan of breaking in lads for whippers-in. Upon putting a whip into his pupil's hands for the first time, he generally gave him just a taste at starting, with "Well, Jack, does it hurt?"—"Oh yes, Sir, it do uncommon." "So I thought, my lad; now mind you don't use it too often with the hounds, for they can feel as well as you." Then, if he saw one riding his horse too hard up hill (and his happened to be a very hilly country), he would give Jack a bye-day on foot. I have seen Jack puffing and blowing like a grampus up the hills, and the squire urging him to greater exertions when he was ready to drop. "Oh! Sir, I cannot go no faster, I'm blowed already."—"Oh you are, are you, Mr. Jack; then I suppose you will recollect that your horse may be blowed as well as you another time." These practical lessons generally had the most decided effect; the threat of repeating the dose proving sufficient to check any little ebullition of temper, either with whip or spur. Nothing like practical illustrations with some minds, whose comprehensions cannot or will not take it otherwise—as the worthy pastor, who could not make Farmer Coulter understand the nature of a miracle without a personal experiment.

Farmer John had often pestered his worthy rector for explanations about miracles, but he never could quite

get at the gist of the matter; so, bothering him one morning again, on going to church, the doctor told Mr. John Coulter if he would wait in the porch after service he would give him a most convincing proof, as every other had failed. Accordingly, having disposed of his canonicals, the worthy rector quietly approached the porch, where John was waiting for the explanation. Mr. Coulter was looking musingly into the church yard, with his back to the door, when his pastor quietly approaching, lent John such a kick in the rear as nearly to lift him off his legs. "Oh dear, Sir, how you did hurt."—"Well, John, it would have been a miracle if I had not—are you satisfied now what a miracle is?"—"Quite, Sir," replied John; "but next time don't ye kick quite so hard."

I was obliged to employ a similar argument once with a second whipper-in I had, who was occasionally addicted to taking rather more of *aqua vitæ* than was good for his health or *understanding*. My first whip being sent out on business, Tom was left in charge of the hounds, with strong injunctions not to leave the kennel until his return. It was during the summer months, and rather warm weather. Some *gentlemen* came to see the hounds, and Tom, having performed the part of master of ceremonies to their satisfaction, was by them invited to take a glass at the public house, that they might suck his brains a little about the hounds. Tom took a tolerable supply of suction, as much, or rather more, than he could carry home quite comfortably, and made for the kennels again. Here, having little to do, he thought he would employ his time in putting the old and young hounds together, to judge himself how they would look. Happening to

pass by at the time, and hearing a great deal of growling and noise among the hounds, I stepped in, and there was Mr. Tom in the midst, surveying them with much apparent satisfaction. "What the deuce are you about with the hounds, Tom?" I said, "and how dare you set them all by the ears in this manner; you are drunk!" "No, Sir, I'm not;" said Tom, "I only wanted to see how they would look together;" and he began to grin idiotically. "Now, Tom," I said, "drunk you are; tell me where you have been, and go home, for here you shall not stay another moment." "I aint drunk," repeated Tom, "and know what I am about very well." "Then," I said, "we'll soon prove that beyond dispute;" so I gave him a gentle push, and down Tom went to grass without delay. "Come, Sir," said Tom, "I won't stand that." "No," I said, "that's clear enough, you can't stand it, and that was only a push that a boy of ten years old would have stood; but," I said, "look out now for squalls, for I'll repeat the dose if you don't tell me at once where you have been making yourself drunk in this shameful manner in the middle of the day." Putting my fists up, Tom did not require any more forcible arguments of this sort, but said at once, "Well, Sir, I won't deny it any longer, I am drunk;" and he then told me the story about the *gentlemen* taking him to the inn, and plying him with brandy and water. "Well, Tom," I said, "there is some excuse for you, and I think the gentlemen, as you call them, much more culpable. Go home, and go to bed, and if you take a cooling draught which I will send you, nothing more shall be said this time at least."

Tom, although only under-whip, was quite as old and

big a man as myself; but I do not wish to justify my conduct in striking a servant at all. I was out of order as well as Tom, and so I felt afterwards. Boys, however, must have a practical lesson or two to break them in, and some will not do so without many such. A wiser head than mine has laid this down as a rule, and there are few who will not *sometimes* require it.

Masters of hounds are often abused for their quickness and impatience in the field. Having been one myself, I may, from experience, say that they are often placed in situations which require almost the patience of Job. I allude to those particularly who hunt their own hounds. Those who look on at the game cannot feel as those do who are eagerly engaged in it. See a man on a good scenting day with a good fox before the hounds trying to break away, but headed in every direction by some coffee-housing fellows, smoking their cigars or talking politics, while he is working like a slave to show them the sport they do not deserve. The fox breaks, perhaps, for half a field; some outrigger heads him back again, and very often a good fox is thus killed in covert which would have left the members of a cigar divan far enough in the rear had they given him a chance. I have known some men head a fox back because they were *actually afraid of a run*. It is quite true, although it sounds strange. It is absurd to suppose that every man who makes his appearance at the covert side is a sportsman. Some go for one reason, some for another; but there is not one man out of twenty who either knows or cares anything about the hounds or the sport. Thus a gentleman huntsman with one aim in view, to afford satisfaction to all, not only finds little or no assistance from those

who ought to accord it, but is often foiled in all his endeavours, and called a fool into the bargain. A young gentleman who had mounted his scarlet for the first season, was once finding fault with my performances, and turning to an old and experienced fox hunter, said "I don't think that chap (meaning me) knows anything about his business." "How the deuce should he," replied my friend, "he has been all his life nearly at it, and I never heard he was considered a fool, either at school or college!!" This satisfied the young gentleman who had been *rather unsuccessful in his little go* the last term, and had left Oxford in disgust because it was *too slow* a place for him.

Some masters of excitable temper cannot help giving a bit of damson pie sometimes, but it is better left alone, and if a man cannot hunt his hounds without swearing, I should advise him to let others do it who can keep their temper. I once, when young and ardent, administered a dose of this kind to a very worthy farmer, without at that time knowing who he was. We were running the only fox left in that part of the country, and he was trying to break where this man had posted himself with some others. I had halloed to them before to leave the spot, but they either did not hear me or understand what I meant, and at last one of them turned the fox back, right into the hounds' mouths. I could hold it no longer, but out came a rattler at Farmer Steers for a fool. "What's that you are saying, young gentleman?" cried the farmer, "I didn't come out to be d—d." The rejoinder was on my lips, "Then go home and be d—d," as a certain squire once said to a sporting tradesman who was doing mischief in the New Forest; but I

checked myself and said no more. Not so, however, the farmer, who was well to do in the world, and lived on his own farm. He talked it over pretty freely afterwards, and was in a great rage, declaring he would notice me off his land, and kill every fox in the country. *This* he need not have added, as the one we had just eaten happened to be the "last of the Mohicans"—just thereabouts.

About a fortnight after this occurrence I went again into the same country to try every inch of covert, hearing another fox had been seen. Farmer Steers having cooled a little in the meantime, and being although a *great* man a good-hearted one as well, came out to the place of meeting, but looking very much offended. There was a large assemblage of bold yeomen, on good-looking horses, who civilly took off their hats as they came up to look at the hounds; but Mr. Steers approached not, and was eyeing me with fixed attention from a little distance. His friends went up and shook hands with him, and I could see something was said in reference to me; but Farmer Steers shook his head. I guessed how matters stood, and acted upon the hint without hesitation. Going straight at once to where he was sitting with his friends, I held out my hand to him, and said, "Come, Mr. Steers, it is not my wish or disposition to make enemies where I ought to make friends, and I will not hunt this or any other country without the goodwill of the farmers as well as the landlords. I was wrong in a moment of excitement to swear at you the last time we met, and I can only say I have been sorry for it ever since. Will you shake hands?" "Will I—yes, I will, young gentleman, and more than that, I was in the wrong as well, in

spoil your day's sport. I have thought of that since, or you would not have seen me out to-day." Joy lit up the faces of all around at this happy reconciliation. All was satisfaction, and I heard many exclaim, "That's right, I like him for it," for Mr. Steers was about head man in those parts, and possessed a small fox covert, which at that time I was not aware of. From that day the farmers proved themselves my staunch and unwavering friends. For many many years they supported me "through thick and thin," and I can say with truth I shall always remember them with feelings of the deepest regard.

There is no finer race of men on earth than the honest, true-hearted yeomen of England. In all fox hunting countries they are the first to suffer, but the last to complain. *Quicquid delirant reges plectuntur Achivi*. Their wheat is trampled to pieces, young clovers often ruined, fences broken down, and their poultry carried off by foxes: this and more they put up with, *without whining about it* to their landlords. Are they not entitled to some consideration? Let every master of hounds bear in mind these things, and remember that the farmers are entitled to civility, at least, and more respect than is often paid them. I always treated them with cordiality wherever I met them, either in the field or the city, and they repaid me with interest. Many a good litter of foxes was carefully looked after by them, and young hounds sent home in blooming condition, free of expense; a cordial welcome offered also to myself, horses, and hounds, whenever I approached their houses; but of this I did not often avail myself, as time was pressing, and I made a point of never stopping anywhere until the business of the day was over. Many of them in those

happy days had all their well-earned enjoyments around them, and why should they not? Are tradesmen and shopkeepers alone to have their days and hours of recreation, and farmers, forsooth, who work as hard, or harder than any, to be always plodding and working at the plough tail? Forbid it common justice! I like to see the cultivator of the soil mounted on a good horse, and taking his day's amusement, which are not many in a season; but what are the remarks which often unjustly assail them? "Look at your tenant, Mr. So-and-so; he is mounted on as good a horse as yourself; times must be good, or his rent too low."

Who ever heard of a farmer, however, becoming a millionaire by farming, or saw one sitting in the House of Commons? But from every other trade there are representatives in that house. Builders, bakers, tinkers, and tailors, cotton spinners, brokers, railway jobbers—not Jews yet, nor Turks, but infidels and heretics enough, and why not farmers? "Oh, they are represented by the landlords, are they?" The next election will, I think, tell a different story. I hope to see some of my friends, the farmers, representing their own body; and I will engage they can give as good an opinion on most matters as many honourable members who are now guiding the destinies of this once great country. There are hundreds of clever men out of this great body of agriculturists whose diffidence alone has hitherto kept them in the back ground. They are not the stone-hearted brutes which their enemies would have the world believe them; nor would they, taking them as a body, feed upon the vitals of the poor to make themselves rich.

Can the pretending and canting philanthropists of the

present day place their hands upon their hearts and say with truth, that the whole and sole object of their advocating certain measures has been for the benefit *only* of their poorer brethren, without the slightest reference to their own advancement? Why, then, are the honest yeomen to be taunted only with motives which are foreign to their nature, and to be likened by one raised from below their own rank by some fortuitous circumstances to the clods of the valley? The farmers of Old England are not the enemies and oppressors of the poor, but their friends. Their motto ever has been, "Live, and let live;" not perish, ye degraded and half-starved workers at the loom, that your masters may ride in gilded coaches, or live in glittering tinselled palaces. The farmer and his workmen have one common and united interest; together they rise for their morning work, together bear the heat and labour of the day, together rejoice or repine, as things go well or ill. No hard task-masters are they; nor spurn from their door the old man who has become grey-headed in their service. Together master and man are seen approaching the house of God on the Sabbath morn, and side by side they are often laid in the narrow house appointed for all living in the evening of that day when all their trials and troubles of this world are ended. Such was the case in olden times, and such are the feelings which exist between the farmer and labourer. The present race of farmers may not labour with their hands so much as did their fathers, but their heads have little respite. Their hearts are still in the right place—the mantle of integrity has descended unsullied from father to sons; and their boast yet is, and I trust ever will be, in the words of the old song, "that it still from a spot shall be free."

LETTER IX.

HAVING now settled what the qualifications of huntsmen and whippers-in should be, I shall proceed to treat of the qualifications of the hound—the hour of feeding, number of hounds requisite to form the hunting pack, and other details. The general hour for feeding in most establishments is about eleven o'clock—the prevailing opinion being that hounds should be sharp set (as the term is) before hunting. They have thus four-and-twenty hours before they commence work, and often to wait for nearly thirty until fed again; for, supposing they kill only one fox in the day, what is that among twenty couples of hounds, the usual complement in the field? Hardly a taste for each.

From long experience and observation I am satisfied that foxhounds, if treated differently, would last much longer than they usually do under this half starving system of the present day, and not so often be beaten by their afternoon fox. The time of feeding should, in my opinion, depend upon the distance hounds have to travel before hunting, and the hour at which they generally commence drawing. There is also another consideration, whether they are carried to the place of meeting in a van, or have to travel on foot.

The hour of meeting in the present day is generally

about eleven o'clock during the regular hunting season, with most of our great fox hunting establishments. In that case, when a van is kept, hounds may be fed about twelve o'clock the previous day, but when they have to travel on foot, I should feed them at two o'clock in preference to twelve. Dogs being carnivorous animals, and possessing strong powers of digestion, require animal food to sustain them in full strength and vigour to the period allotted to the life of the canine race. We have only to compare the duration of life in the spaniel, pointer, or any other species of dog which is accustomed to his liberty, and fed indiscriminately with flesh, bones, and offal from the butcher's shop or the kitchen, with the life of a foxhound, and what is the result? One is worn out and drafted generally before he attains the age of seven years, whilst the other is still almost in his prime. The age of a dog I compute from twelve to fourteen years. The difference between them I attribute to the difference of food and treatment. I shall be probably met, however, with the observation, that foxhounds work much harder than any other species of dog, and, therefore, are sooner worn out. This I cannot quite admit; but, *were* the case so, it would be an additional reason for different treatment.

All huntsmen know that hounds which are kennel sick, or lose condition without any ostensible reason, if let run about for a few weeks, recover their usual strength. Look also at the brood bitches; although suckling perhaps a full complement of whelps, they soon become full of flesh, and even very fat. Now, what is the reason of this alteration? Simply this—the dog at liberty picks up bones, scraps, &c., and the bitches are generally fed

twice a day, and get flesh occasionally. Animal food is as necessary to keep dogs in full health and strength as oats are to keep horses in condition. I shall be told that foxhounds have plenty of animal food with their meat; but in what state is this animal food presented to them? When it is deprived of all the juices and nutriment it once contained, *i.e.* boiled to rags. I know that the broth or liquor, as it is termed, is nutritious, but the food of hounds is generally mixed up too thin. The day before hunting, at least, their food should be given as thick as they can eat it, and were it always so prepared during the hunting season, I am satisfied most packs would give a better account of their afternoon fox. When I kept foxhounds they were always treated in this manner, and, as I have before stated, had always a little thin lap for breakfast, being fed regularly twice a day through the year. The result of this treatment was, that my hounds lasted for many years longer than they usually do; and although we had long distances to go, and once or twice a week left off generally more than twenty miles from the kennels, I never saw them beaten. Moonlight rides were very frequent, but the hounds were up to the mark, and returned home cheerfully, with their sterns well up. They have been running as late as twelve o'clock at night, in large woodlands, where we could not stop them, the owls giving view-halloos all around us.

Beckford truly remarks, "A half-starved hound will never kill an afternoon fox." We often see in *Bell's Life* extraordinary accounts of runs, 20 or 30 miles, but they want the finish. It is no use distending the stomachs of hounds with a quantity of liquid. They require the greatest amount of nutritious matter, combined in the smallest quantity.

The number of hounds to form the hunting pack in the field should not exceed 20 couples, 16 or 18 are quite sufficient, the efficiency of the pack not depending upon numbers, but the individual merits of each hound. Young hounds of the first season are seldom of much use, and often do a great deal of mischief; they must not, therefore, be considered as rendering any service, or conducing to the strength of the pack, but be rather treated as lookers-on. Never take out too many young hounds together—four or five couples are enough at a time—until they are become quite steady. Some young hounds are slow to enter, and I have known them remain at the horse's heels for months, without showing any disposition to join the pack. Such are often drafted by the huntsman as useless, but I have found them turn out better in the end than those which have at once set to work. Precocious talents do not often stand the test of time so well as those of slower development. There is only one fault for which I should at once draft a hound: his being noisy or too free with his tongue—this fault generally increases with his years, and is, in my opinion, the greatest a hound can possess.

Having an aversion to sending my brood bitches long distances to other kennels, it was my custom to take a few couples, or even the whole unentered lot of young hounds, from a kennel with which I wished to cross, with the prospect of one or two of these young hounds proving of service to me afterwards, and I had thus an opportunity of judging from my own observation of the qualities they possessed, instead of trusting to the representation of others. I derived great benefit from this course of proceeding, in many instances; but I once had a lot of young hounds sent me from the Cheshire ken-

nels, some years ago, so thoroughly noisy, that, although they were fine good-looking hounds, and in appearance what foxhounds ought to be, yet I was obliged to draft the whole of them for this cause. The first day I took them out cub hunting, some began throwing their tongues as soon as they entered the covert, where there was no game of any kind; these I put away at once, and the rest followed.

I had, however, great luck on other occasions. From Lord Fitzwilliam's kennels, Seabright sent me one season four unentered hounds, three of which turned out excellent, and I bred from them all, the produce being not only clever but as good hounds in their work as any man ever possessed. Two of these hounds from Lord Fitzwilliam's became very great favourites, and never left my kennel. In many large establishments the breeding system is carried on to a very injurious extent, and there is little cause to wonder at young hounds proving faulty, when the characters of their parents have never been fully ascertained.

Beckford justly remarks, "That too large a body of hounds is a very useless incumbrance"—it is not only a very useless and expensive incumbrance, but the hounds cannot be sufficiently worked to prove any excellences they may possess. It is said that great talents are called forth by great occasions. Many hounds are seldom tried sufficiently to prove their real characters, before they are bred from, if good-looking, and in the present day good looks are often taken in lieu of, or as an acknowledgment of, good deeds.

I think I have before remarked that hounds should never be used before they have passed through two

seasons at least, and their characters have become thoroughly established. I have heard of nearly a hundred couples of whelps being bred in some large establishments in one season. Where such is the case, there must be a good deal of casualty work. The strength of a pack of foxhounds consists in the number of three and four seasoned hunters, and to keep up this, you must enter a sufficient number of young hounds each year. The distemper varies very much according to the season; it is, therefore, the wisest plan, when you have a good lot of young hounds safe over the distemper, to keep as many as you can. By putting them with a certain number of old hounds you can form two distinct packs, promoting the young, as they become steady, to your best lot. Young hounds which are very riotous the first season I have often found turn out the best afterwards. We must recollect that at their walks they have little attention paid them, and are at liberty to follow any game that comes in their way, but, by quiet and decided treatment, they will soon be broken from these bad habits.

A very experienced and clever gentleman huntsman told me he never cared about his young hounds running hare; he said he generally left them alone, and when they had their fun out, as he called it, without encouragement, they very soon found out their mistake, and became steady to fox of their own accord. This latitude is somewhat extensive; I am not, however, prepared to assert but that there is a good deal of reason in it. Dogs are sensible animals, and soon discover what they are required to do. If young hounds would always break themselves *within a given time*, we might allow them, as

my friend said, to have their fun out, and I have no doubt they would become steadier afterwards, by finding out their own mistake; but this would only happen in the event of their not getting the *blood of the hare*, for, if allowed to kill their own game and eat it too, I have an idea that on a blank day with fox they would have recourse to their old pastime, particularly as hare is more *delicate* eating. The steadiest foxhounds, when puss comes in their way (out of sight of the whipper-in) in high cover, will have a sly snap at her, and, as the Irishman said, "small blame to them" when as hungry as hawks. Beckford relates an instance of extraordinary discernment in a foxhound, which joined his pack of harriers one day, and hunted and ran with them as if he had always been accustomed to that game, but when he saw this hound with his own pack he was perfectly steady from hare.

In bygone days my father had a pack of foxhounds with which he hunted both hare and fox; they commenced the season with hare, as foxes were then scarce in the country, but after Christmas they began hunting fox, and were from that time to the end of the season steady to a fox scent, often passing through woods where hares abounded without taking any notice of them. These hounds were of Lord Egremont's blood, a famous sort in those days, and could run as well as hunt.

It is the fashion to abuse both the horses and hounds of the old school; the first is supposed to have been a poor, slow, half-bred animal, and the hounds as never having been able to go much faster than turnspits. In answer to this, I can only state I have heard my father

say, that in his younger days he never kept a horse which was not quite thorough bred and had been trained as a race horse ; but he had more than assertion to prove this in the shape of about twenty cups and plates which had been won by his own hunters.

It is the custom with many huntsmen to take out a large body of hounds into woodlands at the beginning of the season ; there is no objection to this when foxes are plentiful and you do not wish to break away. They may be chopping and changing nearly the whole day, sometimes the body of hounds holding to one fox, but more often split into several lots, each pursuing their own game, until hounds and foxes are nearly all beaten together. A good long woodland day, with blood at the end, is of great service to young hounds, as it shows you what they are made of, and hounds that are not afraid of scratching their faces in the covert will seldom disappoint your expectations when they run over the open. When, however, the regular season commences, I would not exceed twenty couples even in the largest woodlands. They are more likely to hold together than a larger body of hounds, and when foxes run their foil, which they will often do, the ground is less tainted, and even should they divide, eight or ten couples of good hounds are quite enough to kill the best fox that ever wore a brush. I have known on more occasions than one my pack divide, and each kill their own fox. I had also three hounds which once broke away after one fox, whilst the pack were running another, and without any assistance or an individual with them, they ran their fox through several large woods, a distance of ten miles, and killed him by themselves. This would disprove the

assertion made by some, that a pack of hounds, if left to themselves, would seldom account for their fox. *Really* good hounds would seldom miss one. In the days of my strength and prosperity I would have backed any five couples out of my pack, barring the first year's entry, to find and kill their fox by themselves, without any assistance, throughout the season, taking bad and good scenting days together. Hounds are too much hallooed and hustled in the present day to admit of their being intrinsically good, nor are they allowed sufficient time by many huntsmen to exhibit the good qualities they may possess.

LETTER X.

HAVING now disposed of the business of the kennel, as well as having treated of the number of hounds necessary to form the hunting pack, we will follow them from the time of their leaving the kennel in the morning until they arrive at the covert side, or rather, I should say, the place of meeting; for the covert side should never be fixed upon as a place of meeting, for many reasons. In the first place, if you meet at the covert side, the chances are much against your finding a good fox there; he will be disturbed by people passing by or through the covert, and leave it before the hounds are thrown in, or, being upon his legs some time before the hounds commence drawing, they will be hunting a stale drag to get up to him, whilst he is taking advantage of some hedge-row, to leave the covert and his pursuers far behind. It is difficult to keep foot people out of a wood where the hounds are to meet; and poachers will take advantage of it, either to open the earths, or catch your neighbour's game.

The place of meeting should be a mile or two from the covert you intend drawing, and so situated, if possible, as to avoid always the same line of woods, or knowing hands will wait at the covert-side until the hounds come, and not go to the place of meeting at all.

I was often asked, when I had made my fixtures at certain places, the line I intended to draw, but my reply generally was, that I could give no positive information, as so much depended upon circumstances over which I had no control, as for instance, our running into any of those coverts before the day fixed, the quarter the wind might be in, &c. &c. . Occasionally, to oblige gentlemen who came from a long distance, I have departed from this rule, but, as a general practice, it is the best plan for a master of hounds to keep his own counsel, and not pledge himself beforehand to any particular line, which, when the time arrives, it may be most inconvenient for him to pursue. There are, however, exceptions to most general rules, and it is sometimes necessary to break through our pre-concerted plans to satisfy the complaints of farmers, or suit the convenience of some staunch patron of the noble science, by going out of our way to draw a particular covert which they may be anxious to see drawn. There are many tricks played upon masters of hounds, and sometimes the day's sport delayed or spoiled, by acceding too often to such apparently reasonable requests, but which may be dictated only by the most selfish motives. I have been made the tool, or rather the fool of sometimes, to drive the game from one man's preserve into another's. Farmers also have taken me away to avoid having some particular field trodden by the horsemen, so that such deviations should be adopted with caution. He who tries to oblige all will find himself in the same predicament as the old man and his ass.

There are, however, some few *real* sportsmen with most packs of foxhounds, whose recommendation may

be listened to, and who are not likely to mislead you by any selfish considerations. I received a letter once from a young and promising nobleman, now, alas! no more, who was a very zealous supporter of our hunt, informing me that a fox without a brush had been committing sad havoc in one of his tenant's farmyards, and had taken up his abode in a neighbouring spiny. Foxes were not over abundant in those days, and I knew we had no such animal belonging to our country. I therefore wrote in reply that I would with pleasure make the appointment. We met accordingly some distance from the covert, and as soon as the hounds were thrown in, the chicken-killer quickly broke covert, and sure enough the appendage so much coveted by the ardent followers of the chase was wanting. I saw at one glance, as he broke away, that he was a traveller—a large dark-coloured fox, high upon the leg, and the strides he took convinced me we should have some trouble to handle him. Making directly for a large wood, in which there were some strong earths, most probably the residence of the lady he had travelled so far to visit, he tried them first as a place of refuge, but finding them closed with "no admittance here," he went straight away into my neighbour's country. The first unusual feat he performed was, instead of taking to the water, to jump on to a coal barge which was moored in a canal, and jump off again on terra firma without wetting himself. This artful dodge satisfied me he was no common customer, but a wide-awake gentleman, up to a trick or two. My whipper-in, who brought me this intelligence from the bargeman, thought him, I believe, somewhat of a necromancer, and his long face expressed his doubts of our successfully grappling with so knowing

a performer, and without a brush too. "Never mind," I said, "keep with the hounds, and I think we shall see what he is made of before the day is over." Over the canal we steered away, and soon came to a nasty brook, with deep water and hollow banks. Four or five of us came to this about the same time. There was no leisure to look about for good places, the hounds being over and racing away a couple of fields before us, so at it we went; and a proper scrambling and splashing there was. My horse's footing gave way just as he was taking the leap, and I had to perform in and out clever, which I fortunately accomplished, but only three of us showed on the other side; there was no time to render assistance to those buffeting with the waters, as the hounds were now out of sight. On, on they went over a splendid vale country, with very stiff fencing, having it all to themselves, for catching them was out of the question. After, however, about forty minutes' hard running, we got up with the hounds in a large plantation, with a piece of water in the middle, where our artful friend had just tried another dodge to shake off his pursuers, by running first all round the lake, and then swimming right across it. This feat seemed to confirm Jem's preconceived ideas of his being something out of the common run of foxes, and my impression is, if left to himself, he would rather have declined any further dealings with Bobtail. "Come Jem," I exclaimed, "none of your old woman's fancies; have at him again—Bellmaid has hit him off; forward, my lads, forward, away." The hounds joined like lightning together, one crash through the plantation, and over the open cheerily, ho! steadily, cheeringly, on we go! Not an inch of the country did we now know; the field

were scattered to the winds, and Jem and I had it all to ourselves. Expecting a serious affair, we held steadily on with the hounds, agreeing to help each other out of difficulties, Jem keeping just a respectable distance behind me, with no disposition to play first fiddle to this queer-looking dancer; and I felt quite sure he would not desert me if I got into trouble. Another twenty minutes or so (for we had no time to look at our watches) and we came to a few small coverts, where, our fox taking a turn or two, we had just time to breathe our horses, and one or two hard riders came up as well. One, a staunch friend to hounds, and a general favourite with all the neighbouring packs, now became of great service to me from his knowledge of the country we had run into. "Well, squire," he exclaimed, "this bob-tailed son of a gun has led us a proper dance, and I thought I should never get up with you again. Where have you been?" "That is more than I can tell you," I replied, "but had he gone straight on, instead of bearing away to the right into these woods, the chances would have been against your asking me this question just yet." The hounds were now away again. "Oh! he is a thrusting scoundrel," exclaimed my friend Bob; "he's got some go in him yet, and I have an idea it will be a moonlight affair." "Nonsense," I said, "he can't stand another forty minutes, after the pace we have been going. Now, Bob, lend a hand, for Jem's half afraid of him, and Tom is lost; we will try to handle him before two o'clock, unless I am out of my reckoning altogether." We had now a fine fox-hunting country before us, with large enclosures, but sadly in want of drainage; the scent became merely a holding one, which we were not sorry for. The fox, in Bob's

opinion, was now making his point for a large covert, in which he thought we should change. Fortunately there were no earths there; I therefore despatched Jem to get forward to the other side of this wood as fast as he could, and my friend Bob kindly undertook his place. "Now," I said, "we shall be all right if he will only wait a bit, when he reaches Rushmead." Fortunately for us he did so; the hounds soon got upon good terms with him again in the covert, and made the wood crash as they rattled him round and round. Bobtail was, however, game to the last, and he tried to break away twice where Bob and I had stationed ourselves, in the direction of a long string of woodlands, which it was my determination, if possible, to prevent him reaching, as we were sure to change there, and the coverts extended nearly three miles in continuation. Knowing his intention, I posted Bob out of sight under the hedge, with directions to let him get clear of the wood one entire field, and then to halloo and ride like mad. I then joined the hounds in covert, and Bobtail, finding the course clear, broke away; we were not far behind him, and Bob played his part to perfection. Before the fox had crossed the first field, Bob was after him from his hiding-place, hallooing like fun. The artful dodger stopped and hesitated one moment whether to return or go on: that moment of hesitation sealed his fate. The hounds were coming tearing out of covert, and, hearing Bob's hullabaloo, caught sight of the poor chicken-killer, and had him down before he could again reach the wood hedge. I did not tell Bob this was just the trap I had laid for him, as we were a very long distance from home, and my horse had had quite enough of it. All stratagems are fair in war, and Beckford says, "a fair foxhunter and a fool are synonymous terms."

Having made acquaintance with the large woodlands in perspective, upon a former occasion, when I was treated to a concert by owls, I had no great fancy just then to a second treat from their harmonious voices, and was obliged to use a little stratagem to dispose of Mr. Bobtail before he had quite run his course out. Jem could scarcely believe it, he said, when he heard my shrill who-hoop from the other side of the covert, but the hounds' bayings soon satisfied him that his foe had licked the dust, and he came crashing down through the wood in ecstasies of delight. Few were up to witness the *finale* of this gallant fox, the majority of our field being scattered in all directions. Having then nearly thirty miles to return home, I thanked my friend Bob for his services, and we commenced our homeward journey. This fox could not have run over much less ground than twenty miles, and, by the time we reached the kennels, horses and hounds had quite enough for one day.

When a fixture is once made, no deviation from it should be afterwards admitted. In these days, real sportsmen often go very long distances to meet a good pack of hounds, and make their arrangements accordingly. It is, therefore, very unfair to disappoint them. Whatever the hour of meeting may be, it should be observed with punctuality, and although occasionally you may give a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes to those expected from long distances, it should be borne in mind that your punctual friends are cooling their heels, and their horses shivering perhaps in the cold all this time. I have seen hounds waiting for more than an hour beyond time, in expectation of some great man coming down by rail who never arrived after all; and you may suppose a great deal of dissatisfaction was expressed, both by looks and

words. The expectations and convenience of the majority of your field should not be sacrificed to accommodate ever so great a man, and I never would wait more than half-an-hour for any individual, her most Gracious Majesty alone being excepted.

Upon one occasion I gave mortal offence to a great duke, or rather, I should say, to his toadies, by not waiting beyond a certain time, when he was expected to honour my fixture with his presence. I certainly gave him a very reasonable allowance of time, and at last, his servant expressing a doubt of his coming at all, I commenced drawing, but in the direction he was expected. There were one or two despicable *sycophants* out, however, who represented my conduct as an intentional disrespect to him, and the seeds of animosity were thus sown by these artful knaves to suit their own purposes, which afterwards produced a pretty good harvest of discord throughout the country.

In going to the place of meeting, the first whipper-in should be some distance before the hounds; the second a long way behind them. Some huntsmen like to have the hounds cooped up, as it were, all around them. It looks better to see hounds in a compact body, but it is, in my opinion, very objectionable to keep them under such unnecessary restraint and discipline. They will, when let loose from the huntsman's presence, then begin to find themselves at liberty, and like boys just out of school, run riot. Confidence in the huntsman begets confidence in the hounds. This I have seen exemplified in many instances. Hounds which are continually kept in, and harassed by whippers-in, are seldom steady when left to themselves, and out of the reach of the whip.

I cannot too often impress upon huntsmen and their assistants, that undue severity is not only shameful to those who practise it, but always fails to ensure that willing obedience upon which the steadiness and efficiency of a pack of foxhounds entirely depends. I was looking over a lot of hounds a short time since, got together by a friend of mine, and there were no less than three unentered hounds from one kennel, which had each lost an eye. These hounds had been put forward to enter, and been broken in before they came into my friend's possession. He and I both attributed the loss of their eyes, being all gone on the same side, to the whip of some brute of a whipper-in, who deserved to be nearly flayed himself. The manner in which dogs and horses are treated by some miscreants, is a disgrace to human nature. The chief blame, however, rests with masters, who will employ savages of this description. If one gentleman is responsible to another for the conduct of his servants, when insolent or guilty of reckless conduct, surely he will be held responsible for that servant's cruelty to the dumb animals entrusted to his care. One can generally form a tolerably accurate opinion of the master from the man. The servant of a real gentleman, that is, one by principles and feelings a gentleman, not by money and adventitious circumstances, will, to a certain extent, reflect his master's character, well knowing that his situation depends upon his proper deportment. Show me the servants, and I can pretty well tell you the character of the master.

Time being called, and the coffee-housing business over, we will now proceed to the business of the day. If possible, the huntsman will of course draw up wind, save

and except where he has some very small spinies or gorse coverts to draw, from which a fox cannot get away without being seen — *here* he had better give his fox every opportunity of finding the hounds before they find him, or the chances are, that he will be chopped before well upon his legs.

In windy weather foxes as well as dogs are most sleepy, and on such days they may easily be caught napping. I was once drawing a very thin plantation on the downs, in fact just letting the hounds run through it, on our line to other coverts, when, looking forward, I saw a fox curled up fast asleep under a low stunted fir tree, and the hounds nearly all round him. Although going down the wind he had not heard our approach, and fortunately the hounds had not winded him in his kennel. Calling them immediately to one side, as if to leave the place, I turned short round, and gave the fox a cut with my whip before he jumped up. The hounds, however, soon caught sight of him, and a proper race we had for about fifteen minutes before he was pulled down, on the open downs, without a fence. There were some severe falls in this short space of time, for it requires as good a hand and as good nerves to ride well over open downs as it does to cross a vale country. Some of our hard riding vale gentlemen got to themselves *astonishing falls*, without knowing why or wherefore. The fact was, they had pumped the wind out of their horses at starting, and then meeting with a few old cart tracks across the down, barely visible before they could pull up, the consequences might be easily anticipated, particularly with horses not accustomed to such crossings.

LETTER XI.

THE first business in fox hunting is, as an old and staunch friend to this sport once expressed to me, to draw at once those places where you are most likely to find a fox. The day often turns off unexpectedly, and, generally speaking, the morning is the best time for scent. The hounds are also fresh, and a good hard running fox is much more easily disposed of satisfactorily before two o'clock than after that hour. I have no objection to give every fox a fair chance for his life at starting; no mobbing and hustling as soon as he is upon his legs; but let him be fairly found, and go fairly away, and then, my masters, catch him if you can. Beckford, perhaps, might call me a fool for giving any fair play at all; but it is the only way to ensure good sport, and make good hounds. If, when a fox is first found, the huntsman begins hallooing and screaming, the whippers in following suit, and half the field joining in the hue and cry, your fox will be headed back; the hounds becoming wild with excitement, will dash over the scent, and, "Act 1st," a failure. A good fox will make his point after all, so you may as well, and better, let him have it at once.

In the early part of the season, when the hazel coverts are disturbed by nutters and shooters, the most likely places to find foxes are in the short underwood of two

years' growth and gorse coverts. In fine weather they will often lie in turnip fields and hedge-rows. When hunting begins, crafty old foxes generally resort to such out-of-the-way places, and that is the reason they are so seldom found, the young foxes always falling the first victims. In drawing large coverts, the huntsman should try first the most likely part of them, which will depend in a great measure on the day. In stormy and windy weather foxes will resort to the most sheltered situations; but there are always favourite spots in all coverts where they are most likely to be found, and these are of course known to every huntsman who is acquainted with his country.

When thrown into covert, I like to see hounds spread wide, and draw eagerly; not one should be at the horse's heels. Some men have a trick, and a very bad one it is, of keeping a few couples of idle hounds dangling after them, ready for a start, or to throw in when the fox crosses the rides. Such a practice is very injurious to the hounds so employed, and will make them careless and of little value, when hard work is before them. Some huntsmen also allow the first whipper-in to hunt the hounds in covert, or rather *to help draw with them*, for what reason I could never yet discover, except to save themselves trouble. Such is not the business of a whipper-in, and more than that, he has no right to speak even to a hound in covert, unless to stop or rate him. When the hounds are drawing large woodlands, the place of the first whipper-in is forward in some drive, ride, or crossing, in the direction the hounds are trying—he will be as silent as a mouse, and watch not only with his eyes well open, but ears also, to see and hear all that is

moving. When the hounds cross over, he will again shift his ground quickly but silently, and take up another position, where he may observe all that is going on. Should he view the fox cross over, he will of course halloo, and when the hounds are once settled to the scent, his duty is to be away again elsewhere. When drawing small coverts, spinies, or gorse, the place of the first whipper-in is outside, in that spot from which, without being seen himself, he may command the best and most extensive view, not *far from* the point where foxes generally break, but *not too near it*.

When the business of the day once commences, the whipper-in is to recollect that, like a sentry, he is then *on duty*, and he should, if any begin talking with him at his post, respectfully but firmly decline further conversation until off duty again, when the fox is gone away.

The place of the second whipper-in, when the hounds are drawing, is not too far from the huntsman, and at the tail of the hounds; not to ride in upon them, but to be ready, in case any loiter or run riot, to stop them at once, and put them forward to the body of the pack. Hounds should not be hurried when drawing, but have plenty of *time*, and *room as well*, or you will draw over many foxes in the course of a season; and the under whip must be given to understand that he is to keep at a respectful distance, and never interfere unless his interference is positively required. When the fox is found, the second whipper-in will keep as near the hounds as he can, and be prepared to attend to any directions he may receive from the huntsman, and when the fox breaks away he must bring on the tail hounds if any

remain in covert. The duties of a second whipper-in are by no means very agreeable, but he must be content to perform them, and the better they are done the more pleasure he will derive himself, and render himself more eligible for advancement in his own or any other establishment. By being quick and active in getting the hounds out of covert, he will soon overtake the huntsman, and see as much of the fun as any one else; should, however, his business be done slovenly, and any hounds be left behind, he will have to return and bring them on. This being enforced by the huntsman, *Jack* will take more pains for the future.

When the hounds go away with their fox, the first whipper-in will be with them, ready to assist the huntsman, or attend to any directions he may give. Should the hounds come to a check before the huntsman gets up, he will let them make their own cast, but he is not to interfere with them further unless the huntsman is quite out of sight. Many first whips think it high fun to get away with the hounds at first starting, and hurry them on, to show their own cleverness in having a burst without the huntsman. On this account there is often great jealousy between the two. It is impossible, in some cases, for the huntsman to be with the hounds when they first break covert, and the whipper-in has therefore an advantage over him in this respect, of which some are not slow to avail themselves, to the prejudice of the huntsman. For instance, when hounds are running in a large covert, it is the duty of the huntsman to be with them; and when the fox breaks, it is impossible for him sometimes to be close to the hounds, having, perhaps, to crash through several acres of underwood, or

to take the nearest ride leading to the point where the fox has gone away.

The first consideration with a pack of foxhounds is to draw well and steadily, but there are days and occasions when the best hounds may show slackness; in wet and bad scenting days, and where game is scarce they will become more indifferent. It is then the huntsman's place to be with them, and encourage them in trying the thickest parts of the covert. Hounds also out of blood soon become out of heart as well. A famous master of hounds, who hunted a part of Wiltshire for many years, used to say he could always tell, by drawing his hounds round a gorse covert, if there was a fox in it, and when the hounds showed little disposition to dash in, he concluded there was no fox there. In the early part of a good scenting day I think in nine cases out of ten hounds will generally show whether a fox is at home or not, but I should not depend upon their *opinions* after two o'clock, or in bad weather.

I had once a famous hound for drawing, who had a peculiar instinct in pointing out where foxes lay. I never saw it so developed in any other, except his two daughters, which were as good as their father. He was a rapid dashing drawer, seldom putting his nose to the ground, but you would see him examining the twigs or reeds as he passed, and going straight to the fox's kennel. It seldom required more than ten minutes for his survey of a covert of a hundred acres, and when satisfied there was no fox at home, he quickly re-appeared outside the covert. During several years he never deceived me, and was considered by the whipper-in as infallible. He would also tell if a fox had been in the covert, or had passed

through it, by throwing his tongue once or twice in a short concise way, and then coming away. This hound (one of the first foxhounds I ever possessed) I obtained from the kennel of Sir T. Mostyn, who hunted the Oxfordshire country (now belonging to Mr. Drake) for many years—his sire, the Duke of Beaufort's Rallywood, and his dam, Mr. Ward's sort. I had him, with eight couples of other hounds, in the autumn of the year 1822, when pursuing my studies at Alma Mater.

At the end of the term, instead of travelling by road, I commenced my homeward journey across country with these hounds, mounted on a fine old hunter, which I picked up at Oxford. I had intended reaching Marlborough the first night, but the days then being short, I was fain to ask a night's lodging at the farm-house of a genuine old English farmer, where I had once before passed a night, when on a shooting excursion. In a cold disagreeable November evening the hospitable roof of my friend, Mr. Thomas Palmer, of East Garston, near Lambourne, presented itself to my view, and, although I had only met him twice before, I felt assured of a welcome reception. Being but a lad when I first became acquainted with him, I rather doubted whether he would recollect me at all; but there was no alternative, I must either obtain shelter there, or pass the night in some barn on the Downs, for the shades of evening were gathering fast around me. I accordingly put a bold face on the matter, and, approaching the house, asked if the master were at home. He soon made his appearance, but did not immediately recollect me. At this I was not surprised, as a few years had altered my appearance. "Well," I said, "Mr. Palmer, if you do not recollect me,

do you remember the old tune of 'Drops of Brandy?'" "Come along, Sir; I remember all about it now. Here, Jack, Thomas, come and take this gentleman's horse." The last place of our meeting had been at a ball, given by his landlord to all the tenantry, and after being quite tired with quadrille and waltz tunes, he had begged me to get up a country dance, to his favorite tune of "Drops of Brandy." This, after some little persuasion with the ladies, and an explanatory whistle to the musicians, who pretended they had never heard of such a tune, I at last effected, to the great delight of my old friend, whose heart and soul seemed in the dance, although too far advanced in years to join in bodily exertion. I fancy I can see him now, with his jovial good-humoured face, snapping his fingers, and cheering us on when flagging. To please him I kept it going as long as I could hold six or seven couples together, in which I was kindly assisted by one of the young ladies, a great favourite with the old gentleman; but we were at last fairly beaten, and from that hour I have never forgotten "Drops of Brandy."

Having seen my horse snugly provided for in a good warm stable, with plenty of assistants to rub him down, I accompanied my worthy host to the house, where a good dinner, under the able superintendence of Miss P., as she was always called, was soon provided for us, and we sat down to enjoy ourselves, and talk of the days of "Auld Lang Syne." Drops of brandy were not forgotten, with which, after my long and cold ride, I was not sorry to renew my acquaintance, when, after dinner, we drew round to the fire, and settled comfortably down in our easy chairs for the evening. We retired to rest

at a late hour, and, what with discussing a bottle or two of Miss P.'s good orange wine, and the few drops of brandy afterwards, my slumbers were prolonged to a rather late hour on the following morning, much to the delight of my good-natured host. Soon after breakfast I was obliged to take leave of the worthy Mr. Thomas Palmer, whose name, I have no doubt, is still remembered in those parts with esteem and regret, as one of the good old school of English yeomen now fast passing away.

Taking my route over the Downs, with the hounds all in couples, except this one dog named Deputy, and a favourite old greyhound, a hare suddenly jumped up in view, and off went Deputy, with the greyhound, after her. I checked back the other hounds, and rode on to the top of the hill, to see how this affair would end, little expecting my old friend Nimrod could manage a Down hare, which are generally both stout and fleet. A severe course ensued up and down the hills, the foxhound coming in for his turn occasionally; and at last, to my great delight, they managed to overhaul poor puss. No sooner had this feat been performed, and the hare safely deposited in my valise, strapped to the pommel of the saddle, than a party of coursers made their appearance, in search of the very hare which I had just snugly stowed away. She had been found sitting by a shepherd, who had gone off to give intelligence to the coursers, whose sport I had thus unfortunately marred. It so happened, that one of the party was a friend, to whose house I was then wending my way; and, after dinner, when relating the circumstance, and regretting the run they had lost, I told him the hare was quite at his service, and I would

send her to him the next morning. He thought I was joking, at first, and would scarcely believe that, with a single greyhound, assisted only by a foxhound, I could have mastered one of their famous Down hares. Deputy's schooling was not improved by this outbreak, and I had some trouble afterwards in breaking him from hare, but in the second season he became quite steady to his own game, and was my right hand for several seasons afterwards. With the scratch pack I had then got together, he was my chief authority for a fox, and the moment his tongue was heard, the other hounds would instantly fly to him. To those who have never had the *pleasure* of forming a pack from the heterogeneous elements, in the shape of hounds drafted from other kennels, the comfort of having one really good and active dog to depend upon, can scarcely be appreciated; but this hound was truly my Deputy in every sense of the word, and I could not have deputed my authority to abler hands.

This hound, so long a favourite, never quitted my kennels; and I must here plead guilty to an impeachment which has often been laid to my charge, of being over soft (as my friends used to term it) towards animals in my possession. I never parted with an old favourite, whether horse or hound; many of the latter, when worn out by hard service, were continually about the premises. They had a warm house to go into at night, next the boiling house, and plenty to eat, and I have no doubt they enjoyed their "*otium cum dignitate*" as much as any old pensioners in Greenwich Hospital. With good living and no work, they certainly did become most extraordinary looking figures, very much resembling aldermen in appearance, and their very looks gave a flat

contradiction to the recommendation of my friends, to put those "wretched old animals out of their *misery*." Having spent the best of their days in my service, and done their utmost to afford me pleasure, I always considered it at least my duty to afford them that protection and refuge in their old age which they so well deserved; and, notwithstanding the taunts often received from other friendly masters of hounds, nothing ever induced me to alter that fixed principle—at my hand, or by my orders, their lives were never required. Upon hunting days, during the season, these old hounds were always shut up, to prevent their following the pack; but in the cub-hunting they could always do as they liked, and they generally honoured us with their company upon those occasions.

An old hound I had, called Pilgrim, shewed most extraordinary sagacity one day, which may be considered rather too romantic to be true, but I vouch for the fact. He was out with us in the early part of the season, when we brought a fox to our home coverts, and ran him to ground there in a large rabbit pipe. As we tried on for another fox, the earth was stopped up, but not finding again, I returned home and fed the hounds. Old Pilgrim was with us then, and the terriers, which, after feeding, were, as usual, let run about. This was about 2 o'clock in the day. At 4 o'clock I went down to see the hounds again, and, not finding either the terriers or old Pilgrim in their usual sleeping apartment, I made enquiries where they were. No one could tell; but the feeder had seen them, about an hour previously, in the yard together. We searched and looked everywhere for them, but in vain. It being a fine afternoon, and having no-

thing to do, I walked across to the covert where we had run the fox to ground in the morning, to see if he had scratched his way out again, as some loose stones only had been thrown into the earth. Great, indeed, was my surprize, when I discovered Old Pilgrim lying at the mouth of the pipe, having removed all the stones, and dug a hole nearly large enough to hold himself: greater still was my surprize, when upon listening at the earth, I heard the two terriers inside at the fox! The old dog wagged his tail, and gave me a knowing look, as much as to say, "that will do, we shall soon have him out," and I was so much pleased with his cunning, that I resolved he should not be disappointed. I accordingly hallooed to a man I saw at work, and sent him home for the whipper-in and a spade. We soon dug the fox out, and carried him home in a sack. Nothing could exceed the delight of the old hound, when he saw the fox safely bagged—he danced and jumped about, and led the way in high glee, as much as to say, "here he comes! this is my doing." Having deposited the fox in a safe place, the old hound appeared quite satisfied; but when it became dark, we turned him loose again.

There is nothing extraordinary in the hound going again to visit the place where he had seen the fox run to ground, but the mystery is, how he prevailed upon the terriers, which had not been out that day, to go with him. Instinct, in dogs, is very nearly allied to reason, and this dog must have considered that he could not get the fox out without the assistance of the terriers; and, but for my appearance on the scene, I have no doubt they would have succeeded in their object, as the pipe was not deep, and the soil sandy.

Upon another occasion we had been running a fox for some time, with an indifferent scent, and at last, getting up to him in a small spiney, he made directly for a park wall, over which he went, and all the hounds; but to old Pilgrim this was a stopper. Without hesitation, however, he made round to a cradle style, a long distance off, and got up in time to have a taste of the fox, which we ran into in the middle of the park.

LETTER XII.

IT may not now be out of place to make a few observations on the laws of fox-hunting. Where, then, is the law or the rules which govern fox-hunting to be found? No where. It is a *lex non scripta*. We have rules for Cricket Clubs, rules for the Prize Ring, rules for the Jockey Club, and rules laid down for every other national game or amusement; but no written rules for that most popular and national amusement—Fox-hunting. Upon what basis, then, do the laws of fox-hunting rest, and by whom are they recognized? They stand upon a foundation which is admitted even by the common law of England to be good and valid—custom; and that custom is considered sufficiently binding and obligatory upon every master of foxhounds, who not merely *calls himself*, but *is virtually a gentleman*. The tenure upon which hunting countries are held, I may set down as threefold. That occupied by individuals as sole masters; secondly, by clubs or committees; and thirdly, that held upon sufferance.

I may here be met by some large game preservers, who will say, “I repudiate your fox-hunting laws altogether, and will have none of them. Vermin killers, indeed, to dictate to me, and parcel out my woods and lands as they please; the old feudal laws again.” Not a bit of it, my

friends of the trigger; wait a little, and you shall have a full hearing, and ample justice done to your cause also. But to my subject now. Countries held by individuals as sole masters, have generally been formed by themselves, at their own expense, and so conducted with the approbation and consent of the owners of coverts, and handed down often as almost entailed property from father to son; in other cases they have been made over to a successor, appointed by the late master, who has a right to do so, or to dispose of any portion of his country to a neighbouring pack, either in perpetuity, or on sufferance, to draw certain coverts for a limited time. The rights of clubs or committees, with subscription packs, are of a similar nature, except that, in some countries, these rights are delegated to the master of the hounds for the time being. In others, the master of the hounds is entirely restricted to the hunting department; the management of the country being retained in the hands of the club.

The first and great rule of fox-hunting law, as recognized by all masters of foxhounds from time immemorial, and acted upon by gentlemen, invariably, up to the present time, is this—"That no master of hounds has a right to draw any coverts belonging to another hunt or country, without his neighbour's permission." We admit that landed proprietors have a right (if they think proper) to kill foxes, and prevent their coverts being hunted at all by any foxhounds, by the law of the land, or Game Laws; but by the law of fox-hunting they cannot take their coverts away from one hunt, and give them to another, except under peculiar circumstances, as the following:—Coverts and countries may become lapsed

by non-usage or abandonment, the death of the master, or his ceasing to keep hounds, without the appointment of a successor. In these cases, the coverts, by fox-hunting law, are placed at the disposal of their proprietors, and they can dispose of them as they think proper. Coverts may become lapsed by any master discontinuing to draw them for seven years, or by his allowing another pack to hunt them, without remonstrance or interference, for that period. In these cases, the master of an adjoining pack, with the consent of the proprietors, may take possession of these coverts, and they will become an integral part of his country. It has been held that twenty years' possession of a country, without interruption, or interference, or stipulations of any kind, constitutes a legal title to that country. There can be no question of this; but I maintain that seven years' possession, under the same circumstances, is a sufficient bar to their being reclaimed. How, otherwise, would nearly all the hunting establishments of the present day stand? What alterations and divisions of countries have taken place since the days of those Nimrods of old—Noel, Corbet, and Meynel? Where one hunting establishment was formerly kept, there are now four or five, I might say more than this. It was but fair and reasonable, when one master of foxhounds possessed more country than he could by possibility effectually hunt, a part of it should be given over to a neighbouring hunt, and this course has been pursued generally with mutual goodwill and mutual benefit; but it is presumed that masters of foxhounds, being always considered gentlemen and men of honour, are incapable of acting either unfairly or aggressively towards their neighbours, and upon these

principles only can the laws of fox-hunting ever stand. However extended a country may be, so long as the master continues to draw the coverts contained in it, if only once in the season, he cannot be lawfully dispossessed of any portion of that country without his consent; nor can another master of hounds, even at the solicitation of the owners of coverts, take possession of any part of it.

I have heard Mr. Assheton Smith quoted as an example of one who has set the laws of fox-hunting at defiance, and has acted contrary to their rules, in annexing part of the Craven country to his own. From my recollection of the circumstances of the case, which took place some years ago, I do not think such an accusation is founded on facts. My impression is, that the successor of Mr. Ward in the Craven country gave certain large coverts, far distant from the Craven kennels, but near to Mr. Smith's house, to the latter gentleman. Much angry discussion took place in consequence of this act. On one side it was contended that Mr. Horlock had a right so to dispose of those coverts, as being not necessary to the Craven hounds, and seldom drawn by them; on the other, that the Craven Club had the sole right to dispose of the said coverts. The independent representative of a subscription country has undoubtedly the same powers as the sole master, and I should say his acts would be binding upon his successors. Mr. Ward's successor maintained that he had a right to dispose of these coverts to Mr. Assheton Smith; and his view of the case was confirmed by the proprietors of them. It must be admitted that, unless masters of hounds possessed certain discretionary powers of giving or lending to other masters coverts which are not indispensably ne-

cessary to the efficient maintenance of their own hunt, half the hunting countries, as now established, would be torn to pieces. There is no unfair aggression by one master upon another in such a case as this, and no breach of fox-hunting law. Fox-hunters ought to assist each other as much as possible, and contribute to the general amusement of the country. No real injury has been done to the Craven country by Mr. Assheton Smith's establishment, but, on the contrary, much good. The large woodlands, which in Mr. Ward's time were visited only occasionally by his hounds, are now regularly hunted nearly once a week. Foxes fly, and afford good chases; such was not the case formerly. I can remember when Mr. Ward invited Sir John Cope to come down, at the end of the season, and hunt some of these outlying woodlands; and proper badgering work it was to get a fox away, even for a few fields. In the month of April we were one whole day in Collingbourne Woods, with Sir John's rattlers, and did succeed at last in killing a fox, but it was nearly dark before this feat was accomplished, and then not without some little stratagem.

There are also coverts held on sufferance, which can be reclaimed by the original hunt; also neutral coverts, which are drawn and stopped by two packs, by mutual consent. There is also the privilege attached to some hunts, of having the earths put to in the morning in some particular coverts belonging to the neighbouring country; but, as a general rule, no master of hounds has a right to interfere with his neighbour's earths. It has been assumed that, when a fox is running into another country, and making his point for a well known head of earths, the whipper-in may get forward, and stop those

earths ; but I cannot admit the justice of any such pretended law. A fox found in one country, and running into another, generally speaking, is running home, and belongs to the country he is running into ; you may catch him, if you can, before he reaches your neighbour's earths ; but if he reaches them he is considered safe, and you have nothing more to do, than to take your hounds away. Were a whipper-in permitted to ride forward and stop the earths, the huntsman might choose to find a fresh fox in his neighbour's coverts, and, knowing the earths to be stopped, take that opportunity of killing him there.

There is often a great deal of jealous feeling between huntsmen of neighbouring packs, and often, I regret to say, with the masters themselves, which ought not to exist. "Do to others as you would they should do unto you" is a maxim which should never be forgotten. He who takes an unfair opportunity of doing an unfriendly action towards his neighbour, I care not in what relation of life, may rest assured that, sooner or later, "with the same measure he metes to others, it will be measured to himself again." If you run a fox into your neighbour's country, you may follow him as long and as far as your hounds can own the scent, but you have no right to *cast them into* any of his coverts, if the hounds cannot hold the line of scent into them. 'It is but an act of courtesy, if your hounds are running into your neighbour's country, with an indifferent scent, and likely to disturb coverts, which he has fixed to draw the same week, to stop your hounds at once, and return for a fresh fox. Friendly acts like these are sure to be appreciated, and will tend to strengthen those good feelings which should prevail with brother sportsmen.

Having been myself a master of foxhounds for many years, I know how necessary it is that a good understanding should exist between adjoining hunts, and I have also seen the ill effects of a contrary feeling. The enemies of fox-hunting are not slow to take advantage of any rupture between masters of hounds; and a little flame, when adroitly fanned, will soon become a devouring element, and the whole country be involved in a general conflagration. It is much to be regretted that a club has never yet been formed by masters of foxhounds, such as the Jockey Club, to whose decision disputes might be referred, when there existed any just grounds of questionable legality—as to occupancy of, or title to country. Such a club was attempted some few years since by Lord Hawk and other influential and well-disposed masters of hounds, but soon fell to the ground, from the want, I should say, of an active secretary, who ought to have first been appointed, to carry such a measure into effect. Masters of hounds have generally their hands full of business, and dislike taking upon themselves more, but, were a secretary appointed at first by a certain number of influential masters, whose office it should be to write letters, and obtain the consent of the masters of foxhounds generally throughout the country, I think the plan would succeed, and a club be formed which might be inferior to none in point of respectability, and the high station in life of many of its members.

I think it will be admitted by even large game preservers that the laws of fox-hunting are rather a protection to them than otherwise. Were it in the power of every owner of coverts to choose his own pack, what endless confusion would ensue throughout the length

and breadth of the land. The law courts would be fully occupied every term with actions of trespass, and nearly every man at enmity with his neighbour. Englishmen are, constitutionally, I may say, fond of the chase, and the noble science has many more advocates and devotees in the present time than it has ever yet possessed. The current has set in, and seems so strong in that direction, that it would be hopeless for individuals, however powerful, to endeavour to fight against it; and that man must possess a very narrow and selfish mind indeed, who would needlessly interfere with the amusement of the many, when it costs himself very little or nothing. It is far better to have respectable establishments, with gentlemen, generally, at their head, founded and conducted upon honourable principles, under the long-established law or custom of fox-hunting, than a lot of scratch packs, quarrelling and squabbling in the country, which would be the case, were the old laws of fox-hunting done away with.

Many game preservers are secretly, though not perhaps openly, hostile to fox-hunting, because their keepers inform them that the foxes devour half the pheasants. Should there be a bad breeding season, or Mr. Keeper appropriate rather more eggs or birds than usual to his own share, all are put down to the account of the foxes. The old story of two of a trade never agreeing is exemplified in this instance. The fox commits sad havoc with what the keeper considers his especial perquisites, *rabbits*, and consequently he never lets an opportunity escape of traducing his enemy. Keepers will also persuade their masters, if they can, that vermin cannot be kept down without steel traps—which they know are

pretty sure to catch foxes ; but their masters little think that they will catch pheasants and hares with even more certainty than foxes. I took a keeper some years ago from rather a suspicious place, but, as he had a very good recommendation, I determined to give him a trial. The first thing he asked for were some steel traps, to catch the vermin. Those, I told him, I never allowed. "Pray, Sir, if it is no offence, may I ask why you object to their being used?" "Simply," I replied, "for this reason, that they will catch more foxes and pheasants than they will vermin." "I assure you, Sir, that I can set them so that I can catch both vermin and rabbits, but never injure foxes or pheasants." "Well," I said, "you must be exceedingly clever, and I will test your ingenuity." I gave him some traps, accordingly, which I desired he would set in one particular part of the covert. The next morning I visited these traps *in propria persona*, before my learned keeper had arrived on the ground. In one of them was the *toe* of a fox, and in another a pheasant's *claw*. Mr. Keeper was rather taken aback at the exhibition of these trophies of his skill, and, I need hardly remark, there were no more traps set. Finding he had one to deal with quite as wide awake as himself, or rather more so, he never attempted to play tricks again; and he lived with me for many years afterwards, always keeping me plenty of game and plenty of foxes. A man who cannot destroy vermin of every description without using steel traps or laying ground baits with poison, is not worthy to be called a keeper. I will in my next give a few lessons to game preservers and keepers, how they may keep down vermin, without either injury to foxes or pheasants.

LETTER XIII.

I WILL now endeavour to point out how game may be preserved and vermin kept down, without having recourse to those most objectionable means generally resorted to for their destruction, steel traps and poison, which have been considered by ignorant keepers as indispensable to that purpose. I would also, with all due submission, beg to remind large game preservers, that it is quite possible for them to have an abundant supply of game for their own and friends' amusement, and also to keep a few foxes for their sporting neighbours in scarlet.

It is quite an erroneous opinion, that foxes subsist entirely upon hares, rabbits, and pheasants. From long acquaintance with and careful observance of their habits, from the time they first leave the earth, where they have been bred as cubs, I have been enabled to gain a tolerably correct insight into their mode of living. When a boy, I took great pleasure in watching the proceedings of a litter of cubs, which were laid up in a small brake, about two fields from the house in which I then lived. In the evening, during the summer holidays, I used to go down, about eight o'clock, and sit under a tree, near the earth, to watch their gambols. As the sun dropped below the horizon, they made their appearance at the mouth of the earth, looking cautiously and stealthily

around them (my position was always to the windward side, or they would immediately have detected my presence among them); after running in and out for a few minutes, and looking round in all directions, they commenced play, by jumping about like kittens, rolling on the ground and pulling each other about, playing hide and seek behind the bushes, and performing all kinds of antics. In an instant, if alarmed, they would rush to the earth again, from which, in a few minutes, they would cautiously emerge, and sit up to listen. If all was still, they then proceeded a short distance to watch for black beetles, which commence their flight in the evening. Upon hearing the buzzing sound they make when striking the ground, their attention was instantly directed to the spot where the beetle fell, and a scramble ensued for the dainty morsel. Many fell to their share during the evening. Mouse hunting also seemed a favourite amusement. It is astonishing the quantity of beetles and mice which are devoured by young foxes. They are the only *game* almost they have the power of *catching*, until the month of August—the larder, of course, being supplied during their infancy by their mother. Now, it may scarcely be credited that the place where these cubs were bred (and there was a litter there for many seasons following) was our chief preserve, and abounded in game—rabbits swarmed—yet I never saw a rabbit or any head of game killed by them during all the seasons they were bred there. The earth was in a brake, just opposite a large covert, and in the dell between, a grass field, which in the evening was nearly covered with rabbits. The young foxes would often go down, and skirmish with them round the bushes, but

their general hunting ground was above the earth, in search of mice and beetles.

It is a well-known fact, that foxes seldom prey at home, and I have often seen the old vixen go straight through all this host of rabbits, away over the hill, and return in about half an hour, with a rabbit in her mouth, to her litter. When I kept foxhounds, there was a farmer, whose house and farmyard stood within one field of a very favourite covert, producing always one, and generally two litters of cubs every season. He told me he never lost any of his poultry by them; and, what was more extraordinary still, that one summer one of his hens hatched a brood of chickens in the wood hedge, not a hundred yards from the earth where the cubs were bred, and brought them all safe home. Some people may fancy I am romancing, but I am doing nothing of the kind. The statements I make are perfectly true. My own farm-yard was surrounded by coverts, in which I had two or three litters of foxes bred every season; and although poultry of every kind roamed at large about the fields, we seldom missed a fowl, duck, or goose.

The really wild fox does very little mischief either to game or poultry; but I must admit that the Gallic importations play the rogue in a hen-roost occasionally. There are certainly distinct species of foxes, and their habits are different also. My brother fox-hunters may think it a strange thing for a master of hounds to do, but if a farmer complained to me of a fox visiting his hen-roost, I gave him directions to shoot him, if he could, well knowing he must be either a cur or mangy. Does it ever occur to game preservers that their pheasants are *roosting in the coverts*, long before foxes are stirring,

and that a fox leaves the wood as the shades of evening fall, and hunts for his game in *the open fields*? I do not mean to say if a *wounded* bird falls in his way he will not catch him—he would be a fool of a fox if he did not—but the chief food upon which foxes subsist are rabbits, mice, beetles, and even frogs. Hares will, of course, fall in their way occasionally; but, as the hare is fleet of foot than the fox, it is her own fault if she does not escape him.

Some old women, not in petticoats, believe foxes will destroy anything and everything short of the human species; and one veritable old woman believed this also, and was nearly frightened to death on account of her *babby*, as will appear from the following run, chronicled some years ago, and which, for the amusement of those who like to read good runs, even although they have taken place in bygone days, I copy *literatim*:—

“February, 1794.—On Saturday, the pack of foxhounds belonging to the Duke of Beaufort, unkennelled a fox at Stanton Park, which they ran so sharp, that Reynard was obliged to take refuge in a small cottage at Castlecoombe, where he entered, and jumped into a cradle (out of which an old woman had, but a few minutes before, taken an infant). His clamorous foes soon rushed in, and seized their victim; the old woman not a little affrighted at these unexpected guests.”

In a provincial country, not quite so many years ago, a nobleman was persuaded by his head keeper, that the foxes, not satisfied with killing half his game, had actually become so fastidious, that they required venison for their suppers, and had commenced an onslaught upon the fawns in his park. My lord, not being a foxhunter himself, although professing liberal opinions in politics (which often amounts with many to a liberality in politics

only, where it may suit their purpose, but in nothing else), without any particular inquiries, seized upon this lame story as an excuse to commence operations against the foxes, and, accordingly, orders were issued from head-quarters for their destruction forthwith.

A fox-hunting squire, whose lands and coverts adjoined, and who also possessed a herd of deer rather more numerous than his noble neighbour, took great umbrage at this wanton destruction of foxes upon so shallow a pretence; and seized the opportunity, at a public dinner, where many sporting gentlemen and farmers were present, of commenting upon such a liberal proceeding. All expressed their astonishment at any one believing such a cock-and-bull story, but they were still more surprised when the squire exclaimed, "True, gentlemen, quite true, upon the word of the keeper. No one will believe what ravenous brutes these foxes have become; dainty dogs, not satisfied with venison for supper, but the villains must have bacon for breakfast, and I expect next, they will have one of my Scotch bullocks for Christmas! You may judge, gentlemen, of the lengths they will go, when I tell you that one of my tenants came to me with a very long face yesterday, and said he hoped I would give orders directly for the foxes to be shot, or he must give up his holding. 'Why so, John Grubber?' 'Because, Sir, there's no standing 'em any longer; I don't mind a fowl or two, or may be a goose at odd times, but that don't suit 'em now a days, they be come so ventursome like, and strong with it too, you wouldn't believe it, Sir.' 'Well, then, John, what are you driving at? out with it.' 'Well, Sir, you won't believe it, nor any one else, but this is all about it. I

were awoke yesterday morning, quite yarley like, just as it were getting grey light, by a desperate scrimmage and squalling in the pig-stye. Says I to Mary, my missus—you knows Mary, Sir? ‘Quite well, John, and a good housewife and missus she is, too, and a comely-looking one into the bargain.’ ‘Well, Sir, I says to missus, ‘What the dickens is the matter with the grunTERS?’ ‘Nothing the matter with them, John, they are only rubbing one another up a bit; do ye lie down again.’ Just then such another squeal, which Mary couldn’t help hearing as well. ‘Odds bobs,’ says I, ‘this’ll never do;’ so out I jumps, out of bed, and throws open the window as looked into the yard, and what d’ye think I sees, Sir? Why, you won’t never believe it; there, a great big fox, a jumping over the pig-stye hatch, with a pig of ten score on his back—there now!” Shouts of laughter followed the squire’s story. “Well, gentlemen,” he said, “I have not done yet. John Grubber’s story about the pig is quite as true as my lord’s keeper’s about the fawns.”

“Now, gentlemen,” exclaimed a jovial farmer, “as the squire has broached the subject, I think I can throw a little more light upon it—this story of fawn-killing, I mean. I happen to live just outside my lord’s park, and rent some land and a small brake as well, where a litter of foxes is very often bred; and there was one there this last season, when all this work was made about them. Meeting with old John, the earth-stopper, we went down together to the earths. In searching about, we found some fish-bones, which puzzled old John exceedingly, but I had little doubt they belonged to a turbot, and said so. ‘Dang it,’ says John, ‘why, measter, they han’t turned fishermen as well, be they; them sorts of

fish don't swim in fresh water, I guess, either.' 'No,' I said, 'they come from the sea.' 'Well, then,' replied John, "'tis a tolerable trip from this to Southampton Water, and further than I would go for the best dish of fish that ever came out of water.' 'Very likely, John, but you don't know that a turbot is considered a first-rate fish, and seldom seen but at great tables. Many of them are worth a guinea a piece.' 'Ah, indeed,' says John, 'that alters the case; but how on earth could the ould vixen come at it?' My answer to John and to you is, the old vixen became possessed of the fawn's foot, as well as the fish bones, by picking them up, one in the park, and the other on the ash-heap, behind the big house. I dare say you have heard, gentlemen, of the story of the medical student and symptoms. A learned doctor took his pupil with him, to visit a patient, whom he accused of eating oysters, and severely reprimanded him for it. Upon their return, the pupil asked the doctor how he could tell his patient had been eating oysters. 'Simply enough,' replied the doctor, 'from the symptoms—I saw the shells under the bed.' This hint was improved upon considerably by the student, and had nearly cost him a broken neck, as you will hear. The doctor being otherwise engaged, sent his pupil a day or two afterwards, to visit the same patient, who was a farmer, well to do in the world, and none of the mildest of tempers. Our young practitioner (remembering all about the symptoms) looked about, and under the bed, seeing a bridle and saddle, accused the sick man of eating a horse! 'What, Sir,' exclaimed the sick man, starting up in his bed, 'eat a horse!' 'Yes, Sir, I repeat it,' replied the student. 'The deuce you do; then here

goes for an ass,' and he kicked young *symptoms* down stairs. So, gentlemen, by the same rule, our foxes must become sea fishermen as well as deer stalkers."

Much applause followed the farmer's story, although not a very *new* one; and these sayings and doings being repeated at head-quarters, did not fail to extort a reprieve for the foxes, and we never heard any more of their aldermanic feasts. Ridicule will tell where remonstrance fails. I shall, perhaps, be told of the quantity of hen pheasants taken off their nests, which are always laid by the keeper to the charge of his rival. It may not be generally known that, by a wise ordination of Providence, whose care is evident over all his works, that very little scent belongs to birds, when sitting on their eggs, the heat of their bodies being attracted downwards to their nest. Two seasons ago, I had a partridge sitting on seventeen eggs, within twenty yards of a waggon track, which led to the farm-yard; and, although I passed close by the nest almost daily, with several dogs, they were never attracted to the spot, and the bird hatched all her eggs.

Foxes are by no means heavy feeders, half a rabbit generally sufficing for their single meal, and, as they do not indulge in breakfast, dinner, and supper, however many bad names may be given to them, they are free from the charge of gluttony. When more food falls in their way than they can make use of at this one meal, it is carefully stowed away in a hole scratched in the earth, and covered over for another night. When I first commenced keeping foxhounds, I thought more of preserving foxes than game, and our home coverts near the kennels were kept quiet, to ensure us plenty of foxes, for cub-

hunting and bye-days. I had one keeper only, who was not allowed to carry a gun, and his chief business was to look to the earths, and keep up the wood bounds. Under this man, foxes, pheasants, and other game increased *pari passu*. In one season I had no less than four litters of foxes bred and reared in an extent of small coverts, not exceeding a hundred acres. Twenty or thirty hares might be counted out at feed in one field, as many pheasants, and rabbits innumerable.

When the kennels were removed, these coverts fell into other hands, and their present possessor, as a *novus homo* generally does, when first becoming a landed proprietor, commenced a vigorous war (with the assistance of a man, said to be a superior keeper) against vermin of every description, foxes included, by trapping and poisoning, right and left indiscriminately, all that came in his way. Neither did he stop short in shooting his neighbours' dogs, either, if they dared to set foot on the land of his high mightiness. He very nearly succeeded in poisoning a poor man also, who, finding a part of a rabbit laid upon the ground where he was working, took it up, with the intention of carrying it home for his supper; when, having fortunately some suspicions in his mind, he threw it to his dog instead, which, soon after eating it, fell dead at his feet. And what has been the result? that there is about one-third, or not so much, game in these woods, after such grand proceedings, as when occupied by myself, with only a woodman to look after them.

It is the fashion in the present day to abuse the game, and large game preservers, as the cause of supplying the county gaols with inmates. It must be admitted that

the battue system is carried to such an unwarrantable length, that it has very naturally excited the indignation and contempt (I use strong terms, but the occasion justifies them), of every reasonable person. I shall be told that every lord of the creation has a right to do as he likes with his own. Quite true—of course he has in this free country. He has a right to butcher, in cold blood, five hundred or a thousand poor wretched tame pheasants, driven up into a corner, that his name may be put in the paper by some wretched sycophant, as having performed a *praiseworthy feat*. And yet, if some unhappy wight, though starving, with a wife and family, upon six or seven shillings a week, should by chance appropriate one of these birds (whose blood he has been shedding by the wholesale in mere *wantonness* for *amusement* only) to satisfy the cravings of hunger, he would be condemned to two or three months' imprisonment in a loathsome gaol, and his wife and children consigned to a workhouse, his name branded for ever as a poacher and offender against the laws of his country! How fares it with the great game preserver—has he not broken the laws of his Creator by wanton barbarity, and the wanton shedding of the blood of his creatures? The illiterate man, who, in some cockpit at St. Giles's, kills, or rather maims a hundred rats within a given time for a bet, with his dog, is not half so reprehensible as the battue man. Such an act naturally excites the disgust of every right-thinking mind; but one has ignorance to plead in excuse for his conduct, the other has not.

Pretty good for a fox-hunter to run on in this strain! Is not fox-hunting quite as barbarous an amusement as pheasant butchering? Not quite, I think; but without

assuming to justify the one, which has many excuses, it is difficult not to condemn the other. To a real sportsman the mere killing of the fox is no gratification. His running to ground or running away is a relief to many, for he lives to run another day. The excitement and ardour of the chase, and its health-giving exercise, are its chief attractions, and I think there can be no question if a fox had his choice of being hung up in a steel trap all night by his foot, pierced through and through, and torn nearly off in his agonizing endeavours to escape, or to be found by the hounds (taking his chance of good or bad scenting days), and to run for his life, which he would select. In one case, eight or ten hours' excruciating torture, before the brute of a keeper arrives, to beat his brains out with a bludgeon, or destroy him by a more lingering death—in the other "*horæ momento cita mors venit aut victoria lata.*"

LETTER XIV.

I NOW resume my pen for the purpose of giving a few instructions in the destruction of vermin, hawks, crows, magpies, &c. It may not be amiss to particularize the different kinds of animals and birds which prey upon game generally, their time of breeding, habits, and haunts. Foremost in the list, as most destructive, stand the polecat, stoat, and weasel. The marten has become almost extinct in many of our provincial counties, but is still to be found in the north of England and Scotland; it is one of the most beautiful of this species of animals—almost a fox in miniature. In its head and ears it resembles a fox, and also in its tail, which is thick and bushy. The marten was formerly much sought after for its skin, which was considered very valuable, and on that account, perhaps, its tribe has been so much diminished in this country. There are still, however, large quantities of these skins imported from Canada.

When a boy, I remember hunting the marten in some thick woodlands, with a pack of harriers, when other game was scarce. They generally held to the thickest parts of the covert, giving the hounds a good opportunity of scratching their faces, and, when tired, ascended a tree, or went to ground in the rocks.

The polecat, stoat, and weasel are the most blood-

thirsty of all vermin, living almost upon the blood of the animals and birds which they destroy. Rabbits are their chief prey, which have little chance of escape, as they not only seek them in their burrows, but, when driven out, hunt them by scent, and seldom lose their game. It has been said that weasels and stoats form themselves into packs, for the purpose of running down hares and rabbits. This is partly correct. I have myself seen a litter of young stoats, with their mamma at their head, in hot pursuit of a rabbit; and so intent were they on their sport, that, although they met me in full career in a narrow lane, they paid no attention to my presence, but went on with the chase; neither did I (struck with the novel sight) interfere with them. In the winter season, however, I have seldom seen more than two together. Their method, in killing hares and rabbits, is to seize them behind the ear; and so firm is their hold that no efforts of the poor animals can remove their remorseless enemy. They then suck the blood, gnawing into the vertebræ of the neck or brain. In this state the rabbit is abandoned, and a fresh pursuit commences. "Catch a weasel asleep" is rather an old saying, and a tolerably correct one. They are an ever restless, busy, meddling race, and I have met with them at all hours of the day, and night too. Where rabbits are scarce, they hunt the hedgerows in fields for other game, and nothing comes amiss to them. Hen pheasants and partridges, which often make their nests in banks or under walls, fall an easy prey; young leverets are equally helpless.

I must here, however, make some distinction between the stoat and the weasel, which are often confounded

together as one species. They differ both in size, colour, and length of tail materially. I know only of one species of stoat, but I have certainly seen more than one species of weasel. The stoat is yellow on its back in summer, and often white in winter, with a long body, rather large ears, and a long tail, with a black tip at the end, the throat and belly being a yellowish white. The weasel, on the contrary, is not half the size of the stoat, although in bodily shape resembling him. He is of a brown colour on the back, his head more angular and ears shorter than the stoat, stands shorter on the legs, and has a *short tail*. There is one species of weasel so small that it can easily follow mice in their holes; and one of these, not long since, I watched into a mouse's hole in an open grass field. Seeing something hopping along in the grass, which I took for a large, long-tailed field mouse, I stood still, as it was approaching my position, and when within a foot or two of the spot on which I was standing, so that I could have a full view of the animal, a very small weasel appeared and quickly disappeared again in a tuft of grass. On searching the spot, I discovered a mouse-hole, into which Mr. Weasel had retreated.

It should be borne in mind that, as the stoat lives chiefly upon rabbits, game, and birds, and is a great enemy therefore to the game-preserver, yet the weasel, preying upon rats and mice more particularly, is especially a friend to the farmer. An owl and a weasel in a barn will kill more rats and mice than half-a-dozen cats; for, while the owl is watching and pouncing upon the mice which appear above ground, the weasel is pursuing them below.

In the keeper's catalogue of vermin, which, of his own making, like a lawyer's bill, is a pretty large one, the bird of wisdom, as well as the bird of ill omen, is put down as a debtor. The plea against the owls, however, is upon a parallel with the accusation against those poor, harmless animals, hedgehogs, which are gravely accused of not only sucking eggs, but, by some, of milking cows as well. The owl never leaves his place of shelter until the shades of evening are falling; and although a young rabbit may occasionally be justly laid to his charge, he seldom offends further against the Game Laws; and the great service he renders farmers and the public generally in destroying such quantities of mice, ought to ensure his protection. Against hawks and kites I admit a true bill ought to be found—but spare the owls.

Polecats and stoats have their young in the months of March and April, producing five or six, and sometimes seven, at a litter, which are laid up in an old hollow tree or rabbit's hole in a dry bank, in cracks of rocks, and old walls. The best traps in which these vermin may be caught are the wooden boxes, called in some countries witches, and the common figure of 4, with a stone tile. As they almost invariably have their runs by the side of hedges and walls, the wooden box is a sure trap. These boxes may be made of any size, and I have used them constantly. Mine were made with both ends open, and two falling doors instead of one. They were placed first for a week or ten days quite open, without being set; and when afterwards set seldom failed to produce some tenant of the weasel tribe, safely, though harmlessly, secured. I have seen them also used on a large scale, to catch rabbits. The wood bounds being made

good, holes were made at certain distances in the bank, in which these boxes were placed; and, by allowing the rabbits to pass through them for a few days, until accustomed to the run, they were, when set, a sure and safe trap. By visiting them several times in the evening, many rabbits were caught, and the traps were then thrown open for the rest of the night. When these wooden traps are set in the runs of weasels or stoats, a bait is seldom necessary, as these vermin are naturally very inquisitive, and pry into every hole they find open. With the figure of 4 trap a bird recently killed is the best bait, placed on the horizontal stick which combines the trap; the falling stone or tile may be sufficiently heavy to kill instantly any of these smaller variety of vermin, or even a cat. The common house cat, when once accustomed to the woods, is never afterwards of any service as a mouser, and makes great havoc amongst all kinds of game; the sooner she is disposed of then the better. Crows and magpies may be easily caught, by placing a piece of carrion—part of a dead sheep or rabbit—in a pollard tree or on the ground, with strong horsehair nooses upon and around the bait, secured by a strong piece of twine, either tied to the limbs of the tree or pegged down to the ground. In the breeding season, also, their nests are easily found, and the old birds may be shot, by waiting their return to them in the evening. Kites and hawks may be destroyed in the same manner, without torturing them in steel traps, or destroying them by poison, for which there is no excuse.

Although entertaining a strong prejudice, in which I am not singular, against the battue system, yet I am by no means an enemy to the moderate preservation of

game, for the use of the landed proprietor and his friends. Neither is the preservation of game, on liberal principles, any nuisance. As all landed proprietors are not fox-hunters, they require relaxation and amusement as well as their neighbours, and, in the winter season, hunting and shooting are the chief inducements to remain at their country seats. A country gentleman, with a generous heart, may have as much game as he requires for himself and neighbours at a very trifling expense, and without supplying the county gaols with many inmates. I never had more than one keeper for many years, and there was always as much game as I required for the house, and my neighbours as well; and although the parish was large in which I lived, there were very few poachers in it. In the course of twenty years I do not think I ever caused more than two or three offenders against the Game Laws to be corrected; and those were incorrigible vagabonds—*mauvais sujets* in every respect. The tenants on the property were never refused hares or rabbits whenever they applied for them; and when game of any kind was shot on their land, a certain portion was always left for them, so that they became interested in its preservation. Neither were the poor forgotten. If any man wanted a hare as a present he was never refused, or a couple of rabbits for himself. In covert shooting, men were employed instead of dogs for beaters. At the close of the day, the rabbits were laid out, and each man received according to his family, with a shilling also for his day's work. In my shooting and coursing expeditions, during the dead months, I was never without attendants; though not invited, they knew they were not unwelcome, and they all shared in my good

or bad luck. Such a course ensured me plenty of friends, and all were interested in the game. I can only say, I had more, very much more, than I ever could make use of, with all these recipients to boot. Independent of my own land, adjoining occupiers would allow no one to trespass upon their holdings. Their general answer to any marauders was, that the game belonged to the squire, and no one else should have it. Poachers, therefore, had little chance with so many keepers.

In my father's time there was a notorious poacher in an adjoining parish, not our own, who would occasionally make a swoop upon the hares at night, and, not satisfied with his exploits, boasted of them as well. He had been overheard to say, he should have some hares out of a certain field, not far from the house, as soon as the corn was cut; and have them he would, notwithstanding all the squire might do to the contrary, and that "they called him master." This information was given to the governor, who merely replied, "Oh, very well—we shall see who is master, perhaps, one of these days." On the night the corn was cut, my father went out with his gun, about ten o'clock, and, as there was a row of trees running at right angles up to the gate of the field, which was surrounded also by a high wall, he could approach the spot without being seen—it being a dark night also. Standing behind one of the trees, he quietly awaited the approach of Mr. Jim, who soon came, and set his net at the gate, whilst his companion went to the other side of the field, with the dog, to drive the hares into it. For a few minutes all was still, Jem being stationed behind the gate-post, when down came a hare, rushing into the net. Jim was down upon his hands and knees in a minute

upon the hare, exclaiming, "Squaak, squaak, is it, my dear? 'Tis no use your crying out, for the squire can't hear you, and you calls me master now." "Wait a bit," says the governor to himself, "I shall put in a word or two, presently, my boy." So he takes a few steps backwards, and, at about sixty yards' distance, as Falstaff says, he "lets drive" at Jim's seat, which was exposed by his stooping position, and a particular patch of white corduroy attached. The uproar that ensued was indescribable almost. It was Jim's turn now to cry out, which he did with a vengeance; and, scrambling over the gate, he ran away from the field as fast as his legs could carry him, leaving, in his confusion, both nets and hare behind. The governor, having coolly re-loaded, approached the spot, took up the hare and nets, and carried them home. "Who is master now," soliloquised my father! The next day it was all over the parish that Jim had met with a sad mishap in the night, but he would not tell *how*, and was obliged to take to his bed; his wife having some trouble to pick the shots out.

In a few days, however, he was all right again; and, happening to meet the squire, he asked him what had been the matter. "Oh, Sir," said Jim, "you shouldn't have done it; it were too near, it were, and 'twere like hot pins running into me." "What's the fool talking about?" said the squire; "I suppose you got drunk, coming home from market, tumbled into a black-thorn bush, and then fancied some one had been peppering you." "Oh no, squire, 'twernt no fancy, and I warn't drunk, and if I had, the tickling I got would soon a sobered any body; but I won't be caught at that game any more, you may depend on't." "Very well," said the

squire, "keep to your good resolutions, and here's a plaster to heal your wounds this time."

Those were troublesome times, and we did not stick at trifles; being obliged sometimes to take the law into our own hands. As a boy, I never went to bed without having a gun loaded under my pillow, and a terrier sleeping in the room. We lived in a solitary house, far away from any village; and, as highway robberies were frequent, and housebreaking going on pretty extensively, we were always prepared with dogs, guns, and pistols for an attack. A man was stopped and murdered not a mile from our house, on the high road, and a regular footpad (as they were then called) took up his quarters in a wood, not a hundred yards from the lodge gates. This fellow actually stopped my cousin, who was taking a walk with her maid, close by the wood, in open day; but his behaviour was so gentleman-like (so she expressed it), that she begged he might not be prosecuted on her account, if even caught. Her account was, that as she was walking along the lane, by the wood hedge, this man made his appearance, took off his hat on approaching her, and, politely apologizing for his intrusion, said he was in sore distress, and obliged to live upon what he could get, he acknowledged *dishonestly*, but that he had a wife and children nearly starving. My cousin, possessing a good deal of presence of mind, said to him, "Then you mean to rob me." "No, madam," he replied, "I never robbed a lady, and never will; but if you will give me any money I shall feel obliged." "Well," she said, there is my purse, and I suppose I must give up my watch and rings as well—here they are." Taking the purse, he appropriated the silver to

himself, and then politely handed it back to her, with her watch and rings. The servant, being frightened nearly out of her wits, begged him to keep all, and let them go. He sternly reproved her, and told her to hold her tongue. Then, bowing to my cousin, said he had one favour to ask more before they parted. "What is it?" she said. "Only, madam, that you will give me your word of honour that you will not appear against me, should I be taken." "That," she replied, "I willingly give you, and can only regret that one such as you are, of good manners and address, should be found pursuing so unworthy a course. You have not robbed me of much, and more I would readily have given you, had I possessed it." "Many thanks, madam, for your kind wishes, and may you never know the miseries I have experienced in life."

The next moment he disappeared into the wood. The servant immediately ran home, notwithstanding her mistress's orders to stop, and spread the news to the other servants, that her mistress had been robbed. Upon the governor's return, he was quickly apprized of what had taken place, and immediately requested my kind-hearted cousin to give him all the particulars. This she was very reluctant to do, fearing my father would directly send out to take him. "Well, Mary," he said, "you know I always keep my word, and if you will give me the full particulars of all that took place, your hero shall be none the worse for my knowing the secret." All was then told, and the governor remarked, "That fellow I must see, if possible; but I give you my word he shall never receive injury at my hands for his conduct to you this day."

About two hours after we had all retired to rest, my father's knock at my bedroom door and the dog barking, roused me from sleep. Jumping out of bed, I asked quickly if anything was the matter. "No," he replied, "but I want you, my boy; get up quietly, and come down to my room—we must go out." This was nothing unusual; so I dressed at once, and went cautiously down stairs. "Now," he said, "you will say nothing of this to Mary to-morrow; but I wish to meet with the man who robbed her—not to injure him, but to give him five pounds, and to see if I can make an honest man of him, for he must have some proper feelings left." We accordingly sallied forth, each with our gun, and a couple of terriers to follow him, should the man run away from us. Carefully and stealthily we crept along, until we reached the road near the wood, where we expected to find him—neither were we far out in our conjectures. He had evidently been there, but had heard us approaching, and he sought the shelter of the wood again, as the dogs immediately dashed off; but it was so dark we could not follow them, and were obliged to call them back. We searched the wood on the following day, and for two or three nights tried to meet him, but without success; our hero had decamped. A man, however, answering his description, was captured a short time afterwards in a neighbouring county, by attempting to rob a farmer on horseback in the open day, who roused the neighbourhood in pursuit; and, although the fellow topped the stone walls, as the farmer said, like a greyhound, at first, he was finally run into and taken at last. His fate I never heard.

My father had also a very narrow escape from a high-

wayman at another time. He was returning home on horseback from a friend's house, where he had been dining; and on passing over an open down, through which the turnpike road led, he heard some one on horseback following him. Guessing this boded no good, and being unprovided that night with pistols, he mended his pace—so did his pursuer. Being on a thorough-bred horse, he knew he could scarcely be caught, and so put him into a gallop. The highwayman galloped after him. This won't do, thought my father, I must race a bit. His follower raced too; but, not being able to get up with my father, he hallooed out, "Stop—or I'll blow your brains out." "Blow away, you fool," cried the governor, "I have none to spare." The fellow fired—the ball passed through the flap of his coat, as it flew open in the race, but fortunately without injury. Some short time afterwards the highwayman was caught, convicted, and ordered for execution. He got the governor of the gaol to write to my father, saying a prisoner under condemnation wished particularly to see him, and hoped he would come without delay. He immediately set off to the prison, and when the culprit was produced, requested to know what he wanted with him. "You don't know me, then," said the man. "No," replied my father, "I do not." "But I know you, squire, and I cannot die without begging your forgiveness for shooting at you one night coming over the downs. I did not know until the trigger was pulled that it was you; but your voice struck me afterwards, and I hope you will forgive me, for it has dwelt on my mind ever since." His forgiveness was soon obtained; endeavours were not wanting either to procure a reprieve of his sentence; but without effect.

The culprit himself had little hopes, as he had done a great deal of business in a short time, and many appeared against him on his trial. He proved to be a farmer's servant in our neighbourhood, who used his master's horse, when he had retired to bed, for this unlawful purpose.

I have related these stories to show that these were troublesome times, and there was a necessity sometimes to take the law into our own hands. Having now, in my last two letters, got entirely out of the line, I purpose in my next to resume the subject of fox-hunting.

LETTER XV.

HAVING now found our fox, and pointed out the proper positions of huntsman and whipper-in, we will endeavour to follow him over the open, and relate the difficulties which often occur in a fox chase, and the best way to meet them.

As soon as his hounds break covert, it is the place of the huntsman to be with them. He should not be sparing of his horn upon leaving the covert, and this, with a loud cheer or two of "Forward, away!" will leave few, if any, stragglers behind. There is, however, a vast difference with huntsmen. To some, who are fond of and cheerful with their hounds, the pack will fly like lightning; with others, who have a dull, monotonous manner with them, the reverse will be the case. It has been said by Beckford, that when the scent is good, a huntsman cannot press on his hounds *too much*. This has struck me almost as an absurdity, for we all know that with a *high* scent you cannot press hounds at all. With heads up and sterns down, high-bred foxhounds will go as fast as their legs can carry them; but if *horses* can press upon them, in such a case, they may go, as the Irishman said, *faster* than their legs can carry them: that is, they will go clean over the scent for half a mile, or so. When hounds run *hard*, as our term is, it is as

much as we can do to keep with them, and the less they are interfered with the better; cheering and screaming, at such a time, though often done in the excitement of the chase, generally produces more harm than good, and I have witnessed its ill effects often. Hounds are wild enough at that time, without any extra excitement.

Upon leaving covert, I like to hear a huntsman cheery with his voice and horn, and it is then of great service in getting his hounds well together; but when that is done, and the hounds have settled down to the scent, the horn should be still, and the voice too. The huntsman's head has then to be employed, and he should be prepared for casualties.

Knowledge of his country is of essential service to a huntsman in making his casts, or recovering a lost fox, as they generally take the same line. In the early part of the season young foxes know little country, and will run short, hanging about the earths and woods where they have been bred. Neither will old foxes, at that time, unless hard pressed, leave their home for any distance, often making wide rings, and returning to the covert in which they were found. A knowledge of these facts will direct a man of observant habits what to do when his hounds come to a check. At this season of the year a forward cast is least likely to recover the scent. After Christmas, and when the clicking season commences, foxes travel very long distances, and afford good chases. If found away from home, dog foxes will run straight to their native places, and, unless hounds are quick after them, there is little chance of their being caught, as, having an object in view, they put their best leg foremost, and do not linger by the way.

Although the hare is much swifter of foot than the fox, yet the latter, having greater powers of endurance, can travel a much greater distance in less time than a hare could. In speed the foxhound and his game are pretty much on a par, but it is the superior power and condition of the former which enable him to overhaul Mr. Reynold in the long run. I have witnessed many a race with my own hounds in the open, after a fox, but I never, in any one instance, saw them beaten.

I remember, some years ago, we had been running a fox, with a middling scent (never being able to press him), for about thirty minutes, when we came to a check in a road near a large field of turnips, just on the verge of the downs. Whilst trying to hit the scent off, up jumped the fox in the turnips, about 200 yards off. In a moment there was such a *hullabaloo* and *tally-hoing* from the field, that the hounds caught sight of their game as he was leaving the turnip field, and away they went, helter-skelter, horses and hounds all together, straight over the open. They gained upon their fox every stroke they took; but, on rising the hill, a gentleman of the neighbouring hunt, into whose country we were running, cried out, exultingly, "See how he is beating them up the hill; you won't see much more of him on the other side." "Wait a bit, my friend," I exclaimed, "you are deceived about the fox beating the hounds. The fact is, whilst we were running down hill, the distance between hounds and fox, being foreshortened, appeared less than it actually was, and now, going up hill, it appears greater; but we shall have him in a few minutes, and that we may see from the top of the hill, for we shall not be *with them*, that is quite clear."

We had plenty of time for this short interchange of opinion, as we were working our way up the steep hill-side, which was a regular stopper, and *our* pace was not much out of a walk. Upon gaining the summit of the hill, the hounds and fox were far away in the distance, but so close together, that I exclaimed to my doubting companion, "You need not hurry *now*, the business is over." I could see the leading hound make a dash at the fox, which he evaded only to fall into the mouth of another. The only person near the hounds when the fox was pulled down, was the second whipper-in, upon a thorough-bred mare; the rest—myself included—were not placed; in short, we were quite out of the race. When we got together, all exclaimed it was the quickest thing ever seen, and were quite delighted at doubling up, in this first-rate style, an old dog fox in our neighbour's country. Being then at least twenty-five miles from the kennels, home was the next order of the day.

The first check that occurs is often the most critical. The fox, being fresh, makes the best use of his legs, and if much time is lost, he will (if a good one) beat you. Many huntsmen at such a moment will do hasty things, being themselves in a wondrous hurry, and out of temper, perhaps, at such a sudden *contretemps*. Coolness at such a moment is, however, the best help out of the difficulty. Let the hounds have their own fling first; the chances are, if the scent is good, that they have gone over it, unless a flock of sheep have come in their way, or a piece of fallows; but a good pack of hounds, if given a reasonable time and full room, will recover the scent by their own natural instinct much more readily than when taken hold of by an enterprising genius of a hunts-

man, and hurried half a mile off, to suit his fancy or caprice. Hounds that are often lifted, will not take half the trouble which others will, which are left to themselves, in recovering a lost scent; at the first check which occurs, their noses will be up in the air, instead of where they ought to be—on the ground.

Going to halloos, is also very prejudicial to them. It encourages them to be idle, and to look for assistance, instead of trusting to themselves. It has been said, "that a pack of hounds which will not bear lifting are not worth keeping." I admit this to be the case, but only to a certain extent; there are times when all hounds require lifting, but if judiciously done, and not often repeated, they will not be injured by it. This is the exception, not the rule; but I am quite sure that a pack of hounds continually lifted by a *harey starey* huntsman are not worth keeping. A huntsman of this description whom I once knew, always up in the stirrups, with his eyes and ears well open upon any emergency, was once nicely caught in going, as he thought, to a halloo. His hounds and self, having come to a dead stand, after the exercise of all their ingenuity to little purpose, my friend Joe and his now mute companions were, as usual, looking out literally for squalls. The day was windy, and Joe descried at a distance, as he thought, a man on a wall, with his hat and coat off. This was enough; in go the spurs, and off goes Joe with his darlings, as ready as their master for any such enterprise. Only guess Joe's astonishment and chagrin when, nearing the spot, he discovered an old greyheaded horse, with his white nose poking over the wall. It was a damper, and the laugh of even his most admiring friends could not be repressed.

The old grey horse was a standing joke against him for many a long day after, and a horse-laugh was Joe's abomination.

At particular seasons of the year, also, sundry little urchins are employed in the "*al fresco*" amusement of bird-keeping, and, having little else to do, they spend their time in trying who can halloo the loudest. At such periods it is a ticklish affair going to halloos. This is but a poor resource, after all that can be said in its favour, and a huntsman had much better trust to his hounds' noses first, his own talents afterwards when the hounds fail, and when all these have been fairly tried, he may try what dependance can be placed on a halloo—or try for a fresh fox, which is his *dernier ressort*.

When a fox has been pressed at starting, and has given you a good run, my plan is never to give him up as long as the hounds can own the scent; ten to one but that he will loiter somewhere, and if you can only once get upon better terms with him, you may be tolerably sure he will come to hand; and I always derived more satisfaction in witnessing the hounds working through difficulties and gradually improving upon the scent, than in a burst of 30 or 40 minutes, with a who-whoop at the end. Any lot of curs, with a burning scent, may race a fox to death, but it requires a good pack of hounds to catch a good old warrior, who can hold on for an hour and a half. To beat such a one foxhounds must not only run hard, but hunt as well, and persevere in their work; and there is great satisfaction, as well as great merit, in finishing him off handsomely at last.

I may here relate one instance out of many in which my perseverance through difficulties was crowned with

the deserved success. We found a fox in some large woodlands, on a day which was pronounced by the *cognoscenti* in such matters to be a very bad one for scent, and after a ring or two round the covert, a friend of mine—who, by the way, was a master of hounds himself, only in a different line—said he thought we should not be able to do anything, only, perhaps, be badgering about those woods all day; and he thought, as there was little prospect of a run, he should go home, as he had some business to attend to. “Just stay a quarter of an hour longer,” I replied, “for, unless I am very much deceived, we have an old warrior before us, and he won’t hang about here much longer.” “Nonsense,” he said, “upon such a day as this, you could not catch a bad fox, much less a good one; and I have heard you say it requires three good things to catch a good fox: a good scenting day, a good pack of hounds, and a good huntsman.” “Very true,” I replied; “of the latter we will say nothing; of the former we cannot say much at present; but there is a good pack of hounds out, and I wish you to be satisfied on that point before you go home.” “Very well,” he said, “I will wait at least half an hour longer, and see how you go on.”

Our fox had tried to break once or twice at the top of the covert, but was headed back by the horsemen and foot people; his point I therefore knew to be another large covert about a mile distant. Being foiled in these attempts, he at last broke away nearly at the bottom of the wood, making a circuit over the vale, to reach the same covert, in which was a strong head of earths. We ran him pretty sharply over the open, having a turn of the wind in our favour, and dashed up to the earths,

which were closed. Finding no refuge here, our gallant game, without more ado, broke away again, and set his head straight for my neighbour's country, resolved to do or die. We ran him for several miles with a moderate and treacherous scent into the heart of the adjoining hunt, and our first check of any consequence was at a rather wide brook. The hounds crossed over near a ford or shallow place, where the horses could easily cross as well, and after running up to an old stone quarry they turned short back upon us as we were ascending the hill, and crossed the brook again nearly in the same place, one or two favourite hounds only throwing their tongues.

"Hang it," exclaimed my friend, who was still with me, "this can never be right—they are running heel." "No, no," I said, "you are thinking of your little currant jelly dogs at home; our big-headed animals don't do things in that fashion." Right, my boys! for over he went. He tried the quarry hole, but it was shut; "and now he is away again for another dodge, and perhaps (looking sily at my friend) for another day." "Aye, that he is, old fellow, you may depend upon it; you won't handle him to-day, with all your knowing looks and craft besides." "Come on, then, and see, for he has an hour in him still, and we shall make your old horse cry 'Bellows to mend!' before he is booked; for catch him I mean if he keeps above ground." Passing through a small brake on the opposite side of the brook, where the fox, I think, waited a minute or two, to shake himself dry, or determine upon his next course of proceeding, the hounds got upon better terms, and began running for a mile or two rather sharply. We then came to slow

hunting again, over some ploughed lands, and they all thought it was over, when we crossed a road, down which the hounds seemed to mark the scent. We went on the road for nearly half a mile, trying the hedge as we went, when we met a farmer on horseback, who had been riding some distance on it. Eager inquiries were made, of course, by every one if he had seen the fox. "No." "Now," said my friend, "the game is up to a dead certainty, and I shall stop no longer." "Good morning, then; and I will send you the brush to-morrow." "Pshaw!" he exclaimed, and turned away.

My bristles were now up, and I determined to persevere. An old favourite hound threw his tongue, in the middle of the road, up which the farmer had been riding, upon which a staunch friend to hounds quietly remarked, coming close up to me, "Is it possible that can be right." "Yes," I said, "it is quite possible, and now we shall do again." Some of the field going down the road, to save their nags (who had all by this nearly if not quite enough, and some more than enough) viewed the fox stealing away the other side of the plantation before the hounds reached it; and such a row commenced at this unhopèd-for light breaking in upon us, that it baffles description, and it nearly baffled the hounds as well. They were soon, however, out of the *hurly burly*, although the fox had gained a considerable distance by it. Now came the tug of war, for he was as game an old fox as ever wore brush. Down went the hounds' sterns and up went their heads, as, catching the scent, they dashed over the fence, running as if they could see him. "Now, gentlemen, ride, ride as hard as you like, for they will have him in ten minutes."

Such a scene I hardly ever witnessed, with nearly tired horses, which had been coming across some very stiff enclosures; racing at such a time was out of the question, but the effort was made the same. Rival jockeys jostled each other at the fences, and the rolling and crushing was tremendous. Two hard-riding farmers in this scramble of a couple of miles or less actually killed their horses—more shame to them! Mine, I admit, had already enough; and, knowing this, I did not over-hurry him, seeing also that matters would soon be brought to a favourable conclusion without my further interference. A small plantation sheltered the fox for a second or two, but on the other side, leaping a park fence, the hounds caught sight of their game, and raced into him in the open park, pulling him down in a herd of deer, whose company he sought as a last refuge. The deer, being used to the cry of hounds, stood gazing on at a short distance, and it was altogether a scene worthy the pencil of Landseer—the fox in the hands of the whipper-in, the hounds baying round, men with their hats off, wiping their foreheads, the horses which had got up standing alone without their riders, their heads lowered and tails erect, shaking from their exertions—some walking leisurely in, others trying to make a last gallop of it, and the herd of deer in the distance, would form a beautiful picture. We had been running this fox from the time we first found him, I should think, about two hours and forty minutes. We had a very poor scent, only sufficient to hold on the line at some periods. But this only shows what perseverance can do. The finish was complete. It was one of those days of which I may fairly say,

"Hæc olim meminisse juvabit."

LETTER XVI.

WHEN hounds run over the open or in covert, they should carry a good head—that is, spread wide, and not tail (as the hunting phrase is) one after another. A pack of hounds which spread wide have, of course, a much better chance with the scent than a long line of hounds following their leader. To whichever side a fox may turn in the chase, one hound or other, when they run wide, will take up the scent, and the body so go on together without being brought to a check. A hound which runs mute, or is a skirter, should be drafted; they will both do a great deal of mischief.

An old foxhunter once remarked to me that there was a wide distinction between hounds running at a scent, and carrying it with them; and there is much force in this observation. A good pack of hounds should go with the scent, and not beyond it, turning always with it—in short, quick hounds; these will seldom go beyond it. Others dash at the scent, and most frequently dash over it. They have then to recover their lost ground. Here lies the distinction between a quick hound and a fast one; both, perhaps, equal in speed, but doing their work in a different style. The fable of the hare and the tortoise may be quoted as an instance to show what a steady pace, with perseverance, may accomplish. I do

not here intend to recommend old or bad hounds, that will *tye* upon a scent—they are worse than useless, and will act as a drag upon the rest of the pack. The superiority of a well-bred foxhound over other hounds consists in his pushing forward, and making the most of a bad scent. An old southern hound, or harrier, would be bow-wow-ing over the same scent across one field, which a foxhound would carry or follow a mile in the same space of time.

When foxes run their foil in covert—that is, continue running over the same ground, by which hounds are so frequently foiled, and the scent becomes almost lost—some huntsmen will take their hounds away, and find a fresh fox. I cannot admire this course of proceeding; it may be all very well upon a bad scenting day, or when you may have particular reasons for showing a day's sport, or when it is very cold, and your field want warming; but a fox left under such circumstances will only give you more trouble another time, and I would much rather finish him off at once, or make him break covert. Skulking brutes of this description are always getting in the way when not wanted, and I have a great dislike to be beaten, even by a fox.

Some years ago, I took my hounds, by particular invitation, into another country for a month's hunting, and was favoured with not the best places of meeting, merely, I suppose, to try what we were capable of doing. Upon one occasion I was sent to find an old hanging brute of a fox, which had baffled the old huntsman for three years in succession; and so satisfied was he that he would beat us also, that he bet my whipper-in five shillings we did not catch him. The bet was accepted,

which my man informed me of in our way to covert. Upon arriving at the place of meeting, the keeper made his appearance on a stout pony, and gave me the intelligence that the old gentleman was at home, who had beaten Mr. Slowman for three seasons. "You know him well, then, keeper?" Oh yes, Sir, we be old acquaintances, and I think likely to remain so some time longer." "Well," I said, "all I wish you to do is, to go with me into the covert, and introduce me to your friend; I promise you I will stick to him afterwards." "I'll show him to you, Sir, as soon as ever you begin drawing, and my notion is, you won't forget 'un in a hurry." After the coffee-house formalities had been dispensed with we proceeded to business, the keeper accompanying me, to introduce us to the old gentleman's quarters. He was at home, and ready to receive us. My whipper-in had learnt all particulars of his tricks the night before, from the old huntsman, who was anything but a teetotaller, and, finding this out, he had plied him pretty well with drops of brandy, until he had wormed some secrets out. Jim accordingly told me all about him, and received his instructions how to act.

The tactics of this old fox were to keep running his foil, as the term is, round the covert, with the occasional *divertissement* of taking a short circuit in the open, and back again at the old game. We rattled him pretty sharply at first, but he was beginning to increase his distance from the hounds, by failure of scent, and I saw, unless we had recourse to stratagem, the game might last for hours. I was also nettled by the keeper riding up, laughingly, and saying, "Well, Sir, I suppose you knows the colour of his coat by this time, and whether

he has got a white tip to his brush." Beckoning to the whippers-in, who were both in a large drive, which ran through the centre of the covert, I gave them orders, one to ride to the end of the drive, where the fox always crossed over, and keep cracking his whip, but not before he had a signal from me. I then rode down to the point where the fox passed over to the upper part of the covert, with the second whipper-in. As soon as the fox was well over the ride, I stopped the body of the hounds, leaving only a few to follow him on to the other end. The second whipper-in hustled the hounds after me down the drive; and giving the signal to the other to crack his whip at the further end, to which the fox had now arrived, we all three dashed straight in, hounds and all, and gave the old gentleman such a meeting that he broke away at once, nearly in view, and we ran into him in the open in about forty minutes. Thus ended our first day in my friend's country, which was anything but satisfactory to Mr. Slowman, who not only lost his five shillings, but somewhat of his credit also, by our mastering this old fox, which had so often mastered him. Being a stranger in the country, they did their best to take me in, and accordingly selected the most distant fixtures, where foxes were rather scarce.

Our next appointment was quite at the outskirts of their country, and where another old slyboots was in the habit of residing. He was a very cool hand, as the sequel will show, but this time reckoned without his host. The changing from a good scenting country to a bad one is very much against a pack of hounds. Ours had come from nearly a grass country into one almost entirely under the plough, and abounding in flints, by which the

hounds' feet were sorely cut and bruised. We were alike, all strangers in the land; and, these things being taken into consideration, we had a hard battle to fight, all the odds being against us. We had on our side confidence in the hounds, perseverance, and activity; and to these we trusted to fight through our difficulties. Halloos, as I have before remarked, I never attended to; knowledge of the country I had none. We had, therefore, to find our fox, and stick close to the hounds, in and out of covert, being always with them, wherever they turned. Our horses were nearly thorough bred, and good fencers, but in the fencing department the country was deficient. We had, therefore, no opportunity of *pounding* our neighbours, which at that time of day we were quite capable of doing, when any stiff work of this kind was before us. A few of our hard riders had gone up with the hounds, just, as they said, to show *the natives* how to do the trick; but, much to their annoyance, there were few fences to ride over, and, but for the warm and hospitable reception they met with, would soon have returned back again.

A good and jovial sportsman remarked one day to some of the field, "Well, gentlemen, I cannot say much as regards the hunting part of it, but I candidly admit yours is the best *six o'clock* country I have ever been in; and if we cannot go very fast over these flinty fallows, we certainly do go the pace over the mahogany in the evening, and I pronounce your country in that respect second to none." Our entertainers did their best to amuse us, and their hospitality was unbounded. Dinner parties every day in the week; so that we had rather hard work, taking the day and night together. The foxes also ap-

peared to think a good deal about their dinners, as will appear from the conduct of Mr. Slyboots, whom we found at home on the second day of our meeting. The distance from the kennel was about twelve miles, nine of which we had to grind along on a turnpike road, composed of flints and gravel. I always rode with the hounds to the place of meeting; in fact, they were never trusted to the tender mercies of a whipper-in. We left the kennel together, and upon our return in the evening the hounds had their dinner always before I had mine. In those days a good dinner had little attractions for me, and I made a point of never dining out on my own hunting days, or allowing my host to wait dinner on my account.

Arrived at the place of meeting, the first to make his appearance was an aged divine, mounted upon a clever and powerful horse, well fitted for the country, and the weight he had to carry over, or rather *through* it. The reverend gentleman was one of the old school—a good scholar, excellent preacher, of gentlemanly manners; in short, “*Factus ad unguem homo*,” but quite orthodox. Attached to his old theories, and, as a matter of course, a zealous defender of Mr. Slowman, his pack, and all the rest of the family of *Sloes* or *Slows*—either will do—as though, strange it may appear, *black* seemed the prevailing colour in this country, even to top-boots—the tops I mean—coats and inexpressibles no exception. Mr. Slowman’s red coat, or rather originally of that colour, had assumed from long wear the appearance of a dark purple, his boot tops had received so many dashes from the blacking-brush, that you could scarcely tell where the tops ended, or the legs began. His inexpressibles, of dark corduroy when new, had now followed

suit, and, with the assistance of dirt and grease, had become of a most sombre hue. The hounds, too, were nearly all dark colours also, and the whippers-in as to costume quite on a par with their leader. The country was dirty enough, and taking them altogether, men, horses, and hounds, the most dark looking lot I had ever met with. They had, however, their merits—the men knew their business, as they had been rather a long time at it, and the hounds were the finest and cleverest I had ever seen. All *they* required was another huntsman.

After the salutations of the morning had passed, my reverend friend (who was a good judge of hounds) began scanning my pack over, casting certain lowering looks at the whippers-in, who were rather dandies in their way, and not at all suited to his taste. The hounds, he remarked, were a fairish lot to look at, but not to be compared to their pack; this I, of course, admitted. He then observed that we should find this a different country to our own, and must not expect to kill many foxes. “No doubt, Sir, we have everything against us, but I hope you will not be able to laugh at us when we leave you.” I then asked him a few questions about the coverts we had to draw, foxes, &c., and their line of running, to all of which he gave me every information in his power, but with a sneering manner, which plainly said, “You are no favourite with me.” This I of course expected: we all like our own things best, and I little thought to make a convert of one who was a stickler for the old school.

As soon as our field had assembled, which was a large one for that country, all wishing to have a look at the strangers, we proceeded to business, by going to the ex-

treme point of all the coverts, and drawing homewards. After trying some small straggling copses, we came to a pretty grassy covert, lying on the side of a hill, where we found Mr. Slyboots at home, and when he had just taken a canter round the place, he went away at once, and I guessed from his style of going that it might be some time before we should see him again. The day was not a very favourable one for scent, but we followed pretty closely in his wake for about forty minutes into some large woodlands, where there was every probability of our changing foxes; but my whippers-in being both young and active fellows, with a tolerable share of sense, knew their business too well to attend to any halloos in such a case, and although there were other foxes soon on foot, and every one pronounced, of course, to be the hunted one, for no other reason except that he happened to be seen, yet we contrived to hold on our line without wavering, and were soon through this large covert, and once more away over the open, fallows and flints, in almost unvaried succession, presenting themselves to our unwelcome vision, with a green wheat-field occasionally giving us a lifting hand to cheer us on our way. Running hard over such a country, with an indifferent scent, was out of the question.

We were at last brought to in a piece of turnips, not far from a sheep-fold, where the hounds for a moment or two threw up. Observing a shepherd at a short distance, I despatched the whipper-in to know whether he had seen the fox, and what had happened, in the meantime allowing the hounds to have their own way. Something I could see was amiss. The whipper-in galloped back, and told me the shepherd had seen the fox, which had

come very near to where he was, with a rabbit in his mouth. "A rabbit in his mouth, Jim! nonsense."—" 'Tis true enough, Sir; the shepherd showed me the rabbit, which he took away from him."—"We will hear more of this presently—which way went the fox?" "Forward, Sir." The check was explained, and holding the hounds about a hundred yards in advance, they settled down again to the scent, and dashed through the turnip-field. Jim now came up, and gave me the shepherd's story about the rabbit. He said he saw the fox coming through the turnips towards where he was standing with something in his mouth. The turnips being high, he was not seen by Mr. Slyboots (whose attention was most likely directed to what was passing in his rear); that upon the fox coming nearer to him he first threw his crook at him, but he would not drop the rabbit; he then set his dog after him; the fox, showing fight, dropped the rabbit, which therefore fell to the shepherd's lot. This accounted for our hounds coming to a sudden check where the dog had hustled the fox. Nothing will so soon baffle *a good pack* of hounds as such an occurrence; they at once detect that something is wrong, and will not go on with the scent where a dog has been chasing the fox. Many such cases have happened to me, and I always hold the hounds on until they take to the line again freely.

Jim's story about the shepherd and rabbit bothered me not a little. "Can all this be true, Jim?" I said. "O yes, Sir, I suppose it is; it looks all right, but the foxes must be cool hands in this part of the world to carry their dinner about with 'em in that brazen sort of a way. I don't half like this gentleman we're after, Sir,

he'll beat us, I am afraid, yet ; but there is one thing in our favour, he don't seem much in a *hurry* at present, and lucky for us, as we can't make more than a canter of it, over these *glass bottles*." "Never mind, Jim, we will take it patiently a little longer, until we are off these heavy ploughed lands ; and as I see some hills in the distance straight before us, I think we shall mend our pace when we reach them."

Our fox was a traveller, and kept steadily on over a large tract of land, small woods or hedgerows intervening occasionally, until, to my great delight, we had left the glass bottles, as Jim called them, behind us, and came right upon the open down. Here was a change indeed ! The fresh breezes of the hill were as refreshing to ourselves and horses as the soft turf was delightful to our hounds' bruised feet. A wonderful change came over us all—the scent improved, the hounds began to mend their pace immediately. An old sportsman coming up remarked that our fox, being now on the hills, was certainly making his point for another large covert in the vale beyond. "What distance is it, may I ask, and in what direction?" "Four or five miles away, and straight before you ; you will soon see it. Skirting a patch of gorse, where our friend Slyboots had waited a little (perhaps to try and catch another rabbit), the hounds suddenly threw up their heads, down went their sterns, and away they rattled, as hard as their legs could carry them. We could now see the large covert in the distance. "Jim," I said, "get forward as fast as you can to that wood yonder, straight as a line, and cut him off from entering it, if you can. If he gains that wood, he beats us ; there are many foxes there, and we are sure to

change." Jim was off like a shot to his point. Descending the hill, he caught sight of the fox taking a circuit round its base, and, with his cap pointing in that direction, he hallooed out, "Yonder he goes, but I'll beat him." Away spurred Jim, cracking his whip as he went, with his head turned towards the fox, and his cap sometimes held high in the air, as much as to say "We shall have him now." Cheering the hounds with my well-known cry when our fox was sinking (and which was always a peculiar one at such a crisis), their hackles rose, and the race began in earnest. We rattled on for a couple of miles or so over the open, when, viewing the fox running hard for the ploughed land again, with his head now straight for the large covert, which we were rapidly approaching, I saw the time was come for a last effort. Riding, therefore, to the head of the hounds, cap in hand, with a short *tally-ho* or two, of which they well knew the meaning, their heads were up in an instant for the rush, and catching sight of poor Slyboots, they ran into him at the first hedge we came to, off the down, and killed him up against an ash tree.

All who were up expressed themselves highly gratified at the run; but the reverend divine, who had been thundering along on his big brown horse at a certain distance, was not in the best humour with our stealing such a quick march upon old Slyboots; so he said, "I suppose you call that fox-hunting?" "Something like it, I should imagine," was my reply. "But, pray, Sir, what may *you* be pleased to call it?" "I call it, Sir, fox murdering!" "Very well," I said, "every man to his taste, but I can give you chapter and verse for my proceedings. Beckford, who is considered pretty good

authority, says, 'that a fair fox-hunter and a foolish one are synonymous terms,' " laying a stress upon the *foolish*, at which the old gentleman winced a bit; "but," I added, "I am sorry you are not satisfied. For myself, I can only say that stratagems are fair in fox-hunting as well as in war; and, having had a pretty good dose of your ploughed lands and woodlands, I considered myself quite justified in winding up the affair, just in the nick of time, before reaching that *small coppice* before us, looking like a hundred acres, at least."

LETTER XVII.

FOX-HUNTING, although very exciting and exhilarating in the field, is a dry subject to write upon ; and I therefore think it may be more acceptable, instead of labouring to produce a treatise, to give an account of different runs which have occurred to myself, and how they have been brought to a favourable issue—without the pretension of affirming that every one should do likewise. I do not by any means presume to set myself up as a paragon of perfection ; but this I may say, that I have had long experience in everything relating to the noble science, and if success is any proof of merit, I may lay some claim to it.

In my last letter I was guilty of what an old sportsman was pleased to designate as *murdering a fox*, that is, taking an unfair advantage of him. It is quite true that I did take an unfair advantage of him, by lifting the hounds off their noses to a view ; but that great authority, Beckford, says, “ That hounds which will not bear lifting, are not worth keeping, and that it is fair to take advantage of any circumstance, in certain cases, which will bring you on better terms with your fox.” Now, had I been in my own country, which was short of game, the probability is that I should have left the hounds entirely to themselves ; but here the case was widely different. The country I was then hunting was

really overstocked with foxes, except the outskirts, to which I was often sent, as in this instance ; but then we ran back into the heart of the country, where I knew the chances were sadly against our catching the hunted fox. We had, fortunately, escaped this trial early in the run through some large woodlands ; and, knowing the large covert to which we were running to be full of foxes also, I adopted the only course which, under such circumstances, I could pursue, with credit to myself and satisfaction to the hounds, which latter, by-the-bye, were always my first consideration.

A pack of foxhounds, like an army flushed with success, with confidence in their leader, will carry everything before them. I always fought for the hounds, and, by keeping them in blood and good heart, they always expected success to crown their efforts ; and I never felt any anxiety on their account. Liberties, such as the one above related, I sometimes took with them ; but they were too good to be spoilt by a dash of this kind. With the exception of my reverend enemy, who was a great admirer of Mr. Slowman, all the field were delighted at the off-hand style in which I finished Mr. Slyboots, and pronounced it the best thing they had ever seen. "That's your way, Sir," said a sporting farmer, "never mind an old croaker or two—we are overrun with foxes, which I don't care much about, but I like to see some of 'em brought to hand. Will you be out to-morrow again ?" "No, my friend, that's Mr. Slowman's day ; but Friday I shall be at Burton Gate, and hope you will come and see us pull down another." "Aye, that I will," said the farmer, "and a few more of us as well."

Jim returned home in high glee, with his fox's head, much to the annoyance of Mr. Slowman, who was quite crestfallen at our continued success. In the evening my host reflected bitterly on the bad sport they had experienced with his hounds, which he said he had been assured were the best pack in England, and for which he had paid a large price, having only that season taken to the whole establishment. "Your hounds," I said, "are everything a man can wish for; in appearance very superior to my own, and equally good in other respects—if not better; and to satisfy you that I mean what I say, I will give you the same price for them which you have given, if you like to resign the country at the end of the season." "Well," he said, "I am sick to death of this bad work, and the country too, and you shall have them." "Agreed, then, if you are in earnest." "Quite so," he replied. "Then," I said, "they are mine." "Will you go out with us to-morrow?" "By all means," was my answer, "as I shall now feel an interest in the hounds, and we will have a fox, if I am not mistaken; and Jim shall go also."

Mr. Slowman, I should have remarked, had not killed one fox for the last month. My host did not wish to give offence to the old gentlemen of the country, by interfering with their huntsman, who had lived there many years with his predecessor, and was a great favourite with them; and therefore begged I would let him have his own way. "Don't be uneasy on our account," I replied. "Jim and myself will only be amateurs to-morrow, and perhaps may take a lesson out of Mr. Slowman's book; but if we see the hounds likely to be beaten again—(they are now, of course, out of heart

already from want of blood)—you must excuse us if we do just step in towards the end of the day, and turn the tide, should it be in our power. You may depend upon our silence and orderly conduct up to this point.”

Sending for Jim, I gave my orders for the next day about the horses, and that he was to go also. I could see how pleased he was with this arrangement. Mr. Slowman was rather nervous in the morning, having, I think, taken an over-dose of *aqua vitæ* the night before, and possibly a trifle of hot-and-hot after breakfast. He had the character of sacrificing pretty largely at the altar of Bacchus; but running a fox over the mahogany and over the open are very distinct affairs; and he who does the first very well will generally fail in the other. No man can drink hard and work hard. I knew two sporting characters once, who kept a pack of scratch hounds, which would run anything, from a rabbit to a red deer, and, when no game was to be found, sometimes a red herring—anything for a gallop. These worthies could not ride over a fence without being well primed at starting with strong brandy and water. They would then go at anything; but as soon as the powder was out they were all abroad, and could not go on without fresh priming at some public-house—nerves they had none.

Mr. Slowman having marshalled his pack, we all rode on quietly together to the place of meeting, about five miles from the kennel, my attention being occupied with the hounds, in looking them well over, and asking their names. The fixture being a favourite one, we had a good muster; but I observed that dark colours preponderated over scarlet. My reverend friend appeared pleased to see me accompanying his old favourite, and

perhaps flattered himself I was come out to take a lesson, and mend my ways. He was fated to be woefully deceived; but of that anon. We soon commenced drawing some pretty coverts, not far from the road side. The hounds spread well over the stuff, and in about ten minutes a loud tongue was heard—a fox, of course—the hounds being proverbially steady. The body soon got together, and rattled their fox merrily through the underwood; and, after a turn or two round the covert, away we went over the open, Mr. Slowman blowing his horn furiously, and dashing forward on his favourite steed, with a triumphant look at me, as much as to say, “That’s the way to do business!” My friend, riding up, was also in high glee. “What do you think of this?” “All right,” I said, “as to Act No. 1—quite perfection.” “Well, I am glad you think so.”

The pace was good for the first twenty minutes; the hounds ran well together, and seemed bent on mischief, when we came to a small covert, in which was a fresh fox. Here we changed, but their whipper-in not being quite quick enough to the further point, where he ought to have been, could not tell what happened; had he been at his post, he would have seen the hunted fox going away. In this small place we jolted about for a few minutes, and then back again to nearly the same coverts we had first found in. We did not hang here long, but went away once more over the open to some large woodlands. Several foxes were now on foot, and Mr. Slowman had plenty of work cut out for himself and assistants. Jim took care to be always near me, as I had told him in the morning we would, if we could see an opportunity, take the game out of Mr. Slowman’s hands,

and help the hounds to a fox, somehow or other, when he had tried his hand long enough. We kept badgering about this big wood for nearly two hours. The hounds beginning to flag, Mr. Slowman's confidence was nearly oozing out, and his voice becoming exceedingly croaky and ominous of what was to happen; the horn put into requisition pretty often to keep the hounds together, but there was no energy in the huntsman, and no activity in his men; they all appeared thinking more of their dinner than the fox.

A good pack of hounds, out of blood, will and may do all the first part of their business, to *outward appearances*, perfectly. They may draw well and steadily, find their fox handsomely, and run him for *some time* sharply; but a keen observer will soon detect a want of ardour and resolution, which gradually increases, until their hunting amounts almost to indifference. Such was the case now; they were beaten in spirits. Mr. Slowman passed me occasionally, and the last time I remarked, "Your hounds are nearly beaten." "Beaten, Sir; no, not that; they will run till midnight, but the scent is getting very bad." My host presented a very elongated visage, saying, "This is always the way, we shall be here till dark." "Not I, for one," I exclaimed, "for if you don't let me and Jim knock over one of these dodging brutes of foxes, and Mr. Slowman too, into the bargain, if he comes in our way, I shall go home in half an hour." "Give him, then, half an hour longer, and then I don't care; pitch into the lot, if you like. I will get out of the way of the slow coaches, for I see there will be a row, and I shall be lectured pretty well by our friend on the brown horse."

Lookers-on generally see the most of a fight, and Jim and I had been watching the proceedings like a brace of fresh greyhounds, impatient of the slips. We had ridden all over the covert, to see the ins and outs, and know the colours of the different riders to a T—that is, the foxes. They were all of the bull-dog species, small and dark; but there was one much darker than the others, and slower in his movements; in fact, the fox we had been running in the morning. Taking Jim with me in the drives, I pointed out to him this fox, as he crossed over two or three times. “That’s our man, Jim, when we begin the row, mark him well, and don’t make a mistake.” “All right, Sir; but what am I to say to Mr. Slowman when he pitches into me, which he will do to a certainty?” “Say you must help him a bit, as he seems nearly tired.”

I had been with the hounds, whispering a word or two in their ears occasionally, when, time being up by my watch, I posted myself where the fox crossed, drew my horn quietly out, and, upon my dark friend making his appearance, with a shrill blast or two, and a scream which made him jump again, I commenced business. Jim was behind the hounds, ready for the signal. “Hark, halloo,” cried Jim, “to him, my lads—get away!” and, hustling them away, down they came, crashing through the underwood, all alive. Cap in hand, I cheered them over the drive, with “Have at him again!” and, riding with them, they set to work in right good earnest, and we made the welkin ring again. “What’s all this row?” exclaimed one of the field. “Oh, I know,” replied the reverend divine, “those two mad fellows have got hold of the hounds.” “So much the better,” quoth his neigh-

bour; "variety is rather charming upon such an occasion, and charming music they are making just now." Old Slowman looked as black as thunder, and said, "'Twas not fair play." "Fair or foul," I said, "I don't care; for I have your master's permission, and the hounds shall have a fox to-day, or I am out of my reckoning."

What to do he did not know; if he went home he would have the laugh against him, and he knew he was no favourite with his present master. He tried to get the hounds away to another fox, but Jim and I stuck so close to them, that he could not do it. The under-whip, who had come from a fast country, and disliked Mr. Slowman, readily joined in the fray. "That's right, Jack," I said, "you'll make a huntsman another day." The fox, not relishing the new state of things, tried the outskirts of the covert, and in a few minutes broke away over a piece of old pasture, with the vale below us, and some water meadows. One short and sharp scream brought them all out, Jim and Jack too. "Where's his point now, Jack?" "Over the water, Sir, I think, to those woods on the opposite side." "He can't do it," I said, "and save his brush." "He'll try for it, Sir," was Jack's reply, "as there is a head of earths there, and they are *open*, *worse luck*." "Then be off, Jack, like a shot, to the earths; cram the spurs in, and go straight as a bird—never mind a cold bath." "Never fear, Sir, I'll do it, and be there before him." "Now, Jim, keep where you are, this side on the hill; ride opposite to us, and mind he don't get back into that thundering big wood again, for I suspect he will turn yet."

These orders were given in much less time than I am writing them; and away I went, with two young dashing

farmers, who had joined us down the hill, close to the hounds, who now finding some turf under their feet, streamed away like a flock of pigeons. "That will do, my lads," I cried, in high excitement, "forward, away, good bye to Slowman and Co." Turning to my companions, I asked what sort of bottom there was in the river below. "You can't jump it, Sir," said one, "and it's deep; but there is a ford about half a mile up, where we cross over." "That won't suit me just now, my friends; where the hounds go I follow." "But you won't swim that river, Sir?" "Won't I, though; come and see." "Well," he said, "it is awkward work across those water meadows to begin with, but, sink or swim, you shan't go alone this time, for you are one of the right sort, to my thinking." "Come along, then;" and bang we went over a bullfincher into the soft slush on the other side.

Scrambling through these peaty meadows, however, was no joke, and our boots and buckskins were the colour of Mr. Slowman's very soon. The river side was nearly approached, when, in an osier bed on its banks, the fox suddenly changed his mind, and, instead of taking to the water, turned up the osier bed, and ran by its side. "I am not sorry for that move," said my companion; "my teeth began to chatter at the very thought of it." "Oh," I said, "a little washing would have made us look like decent people again. Cold water don't agree with me, but if we catch this old fox, the chances are I shall treat myself to a little *hot with*, after dinner, and," I added, "you shall have his brush to stir your bowl with."

Fortunately for my friend the osier bed declined

gradually from the river, and the fox, holding to its shelter from view, ran the whole length, and we soon found ourselves on *terra firma* once more, running up the vale through a few grass fields. The hounds were now running hard for their game, and at this moment the field, who had been coffee-housing on the other side of the covert when we slipped away, came rattling down the hill side at various points, and the racket they made kept the fox for some time from turning back in that direction. We ran thus for a couple of miles, straight up the valley, Jim riding parallel with us along the ridge. Old Slowman and others cut in at right angles, to take the lead out of our hands, but he could not keep his ground—10st and a thorough bred were not to be beaten quite so easily, and the fencing we encountered was more in our usual line of business than his, although he rode hard enough, and with vengeance just then, to get—to use a vulgar expression—*the fat out of the fire*. The crushing, groaning, and straining, through these heavy enclosures, was tremendous; with an occasional dash of damson-pie, which I heard going on behind me. All this was highly amusing as I kept steadily on, determined not to be beaten. The household brigade were soon far in the rear.

When we got up to our fox in a thick hedgerow, the hounds did not see him, as he jumped out behind them, but I did. The scream I uttered brought them to in a minute, and up the hill we went, heads up and sterns down, with another big wood before us. Now, Jim, I thought, we shall barely do it, if you are in the wrong place. I put spurs to my horse for a last effort, when Jim's welcome cry rung in my ears—"Tally-ho! here he

comes!" Shriek after shriek followed, and down came Jim, with the fox before him, right in among the leading hounds. The "who-hoop!" he uttered might have been heard in the next town. The reins instantly dropped upon my horse's neck, and I then walked leisurely in. Jim's attitude was highly picturesque. On the top of a hillock he stood, with his cap in his right hand, and the fox in his left, held high over his head—the hounds, some lying, others baying around him. His screams must have struck terror into poor old Slowman's heart, who was making the best fight he could still up the hill, to be there or thereabouts.

The ceremony of dividing this dainty morsel among the eager and expectant hounds was delayed to give all the field who remained an opportunity of being in at—what they had not seen for a month before—the death of the fox. Most of them laughed, and thought it a capital joke, my taking the cards into my own hands in this way, but others of the orthodox school, looked anything but pleased at the slip I had given them in the big wood, and thought I was taking great liberties. My reverend friend slowly approached with a countenance sour enough to turn new milk. "A pretty way of doing things," I heard him sneeringly remark, "mobbing and riding foxes to death in this manner, with other people's hounds too. He might spoil his own if he liked, and welcome, but I am surprised Mr. —— allows his pack to be treated so." "Without my friend's permission, Sir," I replied rather angrily, "I should not have taken such a liberty. His hounds wanted blood, and I have killed a fox for them, that is all. For myself, I do not come into this country to be taught lessons in fox-hunting. Little as I do know,

I shall not take a leaf out of your book, at any rate. Give me the fox, Jim. Now, gentlemen, if you please, just let us have a little elbow room, as these poor hounds are craving to taste a bit of fox once more."

Upon Jim handing me the fox, the old gentleman said aloud, "A heavy vixen, poor brute!" and walked away. My hackles were up at this unfair accusation. "Come here, Jim," I said; "take these tokens (cutting them out, and wrapping them in a piece of paper before the field) to that gentleman, with my compliments." Jim hesitated. "Do as I bid you, instantly, Sir," I added. Following my snarling enemy, he overtook him in a body of his friends, and taking off his cap, respectfully said, "Master's compliments, Mr.—, and hopes you will be *now satisfied this don't belong to a vixen.*" His friends could not restrain their laughter at James's demure but wicked look, as he tendered his *credentials*. Out it came, "Hah, hah, hah, capital, he has you now, doctor." The old gentleman was furious, but Jim skipped back in a trice to assist at the orgies. So much for Mr. Slowman's day.

LETTER XVIII.

Our sayings and doings having made rather a noise in the country, and it being spread abroad that the strangers were to be at Burton Gate on Friday, every animal, from a mule to a cart-horse, was put in requisition, and a large and motley field assembled to meet us at the fixture. A venerable old squire, too, who ranked first in the country, at this time returned home, and made his appearance. He had heard of our performances, and being of a cheerful and generous disposition, fond of the sport, and an admirer of both quick hounds and quick horses, always keeping thorough-bred stock himself, and a horse to improve the breed amongst the farmers, he was a great and deserved favourite. He came up at once and made my acquaintance, said he was glad to hear of my knocking the foxes about—just what they wanted. “Yes, Sir,” I said, “I think they will bear thinning out a little.” “Quite my opinion.” “But there are some of your neighbours who think we are a very crazy lot, and are very hard upon us.” “Never mind them, young gentleman, you may reckon me among your friends, and old James Dunbar is not to be sneezed at—rattle away, and I will help you through thick and thin.”

With many thanks for his proffered assistance, we proceeded to draw a small coppice, which lay just inside

and after a high park wall, built of bricks. The ground being lowest on the wood side, it was difficult—almost impossible—for any hounds to jump it. There were large hare holes at certain distances, wide enough for a fox to pass through, but not a hound. One of Mr. Slowman's favourites had taken up his abode in this pretty spot, and, being a very artful dodger, was selected as certain to baffle us upon this occasion. Jim and Jack had now become great friends, after our last day's performance, and we had, therefore, full information as to the measures of Mr. Wiley, of Burton Park, and we took our precautions accordingly. This crafty old gentleman always lay close under the wall, and, upon being found, immediately bolted through one of the hare holes, across the road, and away to some other small coverts, while the hounds were fruitlessly attempting to jump the wall.

Mr. Slowman, I found, had been bothered repeatedly in this manner, and instead of putting some of the hounds over the wall at once, had the pack whipped after him to the nearest lodge gate, by which time his friend Wiley had gone a couple of miles, at least, and, after making a circuit round the country, he always came back through the lower part of the park, and through the hare holes again, where a similar scene was enacted. If not beaten at this game, it was very evident to me that he would serve us the same trick he had so often palmed upon Mr. Slowman with success. Running this over in my mind, I at length decided upon a course which I thought would put me upon a par with Mr. Wiley, and Jim was accordingly made acquainted with my plans. This was arranged in our way to the place of meeting in the morning, Ned, the under-whip, also receiving his instructions.

Mr. Wiley was, as usual, at home, and ready for us. He was scarcely found, before he was through the hare hole, and the hounds at the wall. Jim, being on the other side, ready for business, myself and the under-whip jumped off our horses, and, handing five or six couples over the wall, rushed with the remainder of the pack through the lodge gates, which I had directed to be kept open for the emergency. Taking a lane opposite, we dashed along until we joined, Jim and his short cry coming towards us in high career.

The scent being good, we gave Mr. Wiley such a dusting, that he very soon turned his head, and made a short circuit round into the lower part of the park again, and straight through it for the same place, where he dodged us through the hare hole at starting. Knowing now his line of running, I determined upon a bold stroke to bother his tactics a little, and try and beat him off his foil. Taking the hounds up at once, I galloped straight to the lodge gates to give him a meeting the other side. The *ruse* succeeded—we barely escaped viewing him at the lane, but we were so close, that the hounds set to work, running as if they could see him, and he went straight away for five and twenty minutes as hard as we could pelt for a drain. Jim jumping off examined the place, and shook his head. “He has done for us now, Sir, I’m afraid.” “Stop a bit, Jim, let me have a look at it.” The drain was large and deep, and emptied itself into a pond close to us. We had no terrier; what was to be done? Jim looked blank—“My five shillings is gone, Sir, I believe, this time.”

The field soon came up, and among the first my young friend the farmer. Beckoning him to me, I made in-

quiries about the drain. He said he knew it well, and that we could not get the fox out, as it ran some length up the field, and advised me to give him up at once and look for another; "And be laughed at by the Slows," I added. "No, farmer, I must have him out in the open once more; he is not half beaten yet, and a bird in the hand you know——" "Well, Sir, what's to be done; I am ready to lend a hand." "Go, then, straight away to that farmhouse, bring me a good bundle of straw under your arm, and a tinder-box (cigars were not then in fashion), and some brimstone matches, the more the better." Off he went joyfully to do my bidding. My old friend, as usual (who would come out), seemed now in good humour. "He has beaten you, I think," he said sarcastically. "I am not quite satisfied yet on that point," I replied. "Oh, I suppose you are going to dig a man's field to pieces, to kill a fox and eat him on the earth." "No, Sir, we do not do things in that cowardly way in our part of the world; but bolt him I will if I can."

The young farmer quickly returned, and borrowed a spade from a hedger and ditcher. I stopped up the mouth of the drain leaving Jim there, who was told what to do. I then took the hounds with me to the upper end of the drain, where we opened a hole; the hounds *winded* him *down* the drain—that was all I wanted to know. "Now, farmer, for the straw and matches." Cramming all the straw into the drain, I set fire to it, and threw the rest of the matches upon it. When well burning I stamped some sods upon the entrance. "Well, Sir, if that don't make him sneeze snuff won't, that's all I can say; why he'll stink like a burnt pig when he comes

out." "So much the better, farmer, we shall run the harder." "You do know a wrinkle or two in the parts you come from about catching foxes, and no mistake."

My hat being now held up, Jim raised his cap also in answer to my signal, and jumped upon his horse away from the other end of the drain. The smoke having no vent above, forced its way down to the lower end, when Jim pulling away the sods, out came the brimstone vapour, and in a trice Mr. Wiley also made his exit, in a terrible fluster. Into the pond he dashed, and when through on the other side, Jim's shriek made him jump off his legs. "Hold hard a minute, gentlemen, let the hounds settle to the scent." It was useless; I might as well have spoken to the winds; away they went, hounds and horses, pell-mell together, but fortunately there was a stiff white-thorn hedge before us, which was a stopper to many. The first flight, however, went over; then came the scramble with the craners and thrusters. Old Dunbar took his line upon a long-legged thorough-bred, for an easy place, to which the eyes of a sporting chemist, mounted upon a nondescript sort of an animal—with a carcass like a weasel, and a head like a fiddle—had been also directed. These two, bent upon the same gap, formed a junction at acute angles, just as they reached the fence. The shock was electrifying to the small chemist, who was shot out of his saddle like the cork of one of his soda water bottles, and went flying into the next field. "My eyes!" quoth the farmer, "little Mr. Mixum is shot into the next parish. What a purl!" "Oh dear, oh dear," cried another in the ditch, "pull my horse off, he's breaking my leg." "Hold hard, Doctor H.," said the farmer, "there's a job for you." "Lie still a bit, I'll

be back in ten minutes," said the doctor, "can't stop now." We were soon out of this hurly-burly, and straining to regain our places in the first rank, Jim carrying on the charge furiously. The unceremonious way in which Wiley had been ejected from his last refuge, appeared to have thrown such a mist around him, that he hardly knew where he was running, and the burst was short and decisive, which put an end to his artful dodges. The "whoop-whoop," soon resounded over the Last of the Mohicans, for this was the last of those upon which old Mr. Slowman had pinned his faith to beat us. His three mighty warriors had now fallen before the strangers. The fight had been won, *væ victis*.

The day being yet early, we drew some small spinies, at the end of which a fox went away, and gave us a pretty skurry for about twenty minutes into a covert of about forty acres; the pace was severe whilst it lasted, but our fox showed no disposition to quit his present quarters, or try it again in the open. The scent being good, the hounds rattled him round the covert at a clinking rate; but, being a sulky one, he would not break. Jim came down the ride to where I was. "Shall I finish him off-hand, Sir? he's a bad one, and there's no more go in him." "No, Jim, let them alone; we've had wildish work this morning, and it will do the hounds good to scratch their faces a little—mind we don't change, that's all." "No fear of that, Sir; they are running as if they were tied to him, and his mouth is wide open already. My notion is, he's been a-breakfasting rather late this morning." Old Dunbar and the reverend divine soon after joined me in the ride. "By Jove, my old friend, they are a cheerful lot, how they score through

the covert," he was remarking; "hang it, I wish we could change them for old Slowman and Co." Some reply was made in a gruff tone. "You are too hard upon these youngsters, and forget that when you and I were young, *we* could do a thing or two. No more grumbling, doctor, for hang me if I won't double my subscription if they will hunt the country next season." A decided change had come over the doctor, for, upon coming up, he expressed his satisfaction at the manner in which the hounds were doing their work; and, wonderful to relate, asked me to dine with him the following week. The fox now turned very short, and it was very soon over with him.

Hounds soon find out when a fox is sinking, and it is at this time that there is great risk of their losing him, by dashing in their eagerness over the scent, the fox often lying down behind them. I once witnessed a curious instance of this in my own country. We had found a fox in our grass district, and had a beautiful burst for about forty minutes, with a burning scent, into a small covert, where there was a head of earths—the hounds had, in fact, run away from us all; and when I got up, they were standing still in some short underwood, with their heads up. An old friend of mine, and a capital sportsman, who was with me, on seeing the hounds in such a position, exclaimed, "Why, what's in the wind now?" "Nothing," I said, "that's very clear." "He's gone to ground," said Bob. The hounds were standing close by the earths. I examined all of them; none were open. "Here is a queer affair, indeed," said Bob; "but where's the fox, Squire?" "Among the hounds." "Among the hounds!" he said; "how the

deuce can that be? I can see every inch of ground where they are standing; but no fox can be there." "There he is, then, I will swear; or my hounds ought to be hanged, every one of them." Upon looking under an old ash stoul, I espied the fox, curled up, literally in the midst of the hounds. "There he is, by Jupiter, Bob, not ten yards from your horse's head." In another minute he jumped up among the hounds, and of course was finished. "That's all right," said Bob, "let them have him at once, and we will go and look for another fox before the spoonies come up. Egad! how they will stare when I show them the brush."

We had come over some very stiff enclosures, having to cross a nasty brook twice, with hollow banks; and many of the spoonies, as Bob called the rear rank, had been treated to a cold bath; but one, and a good sportsman to boot, who sat rather loose in his saddle, was shot clean over to the other side, by his horse stopping short as he came to the bank; and this was not the worst part of his flying leap, for a youngster who was out on a pony, caught his horse, jumped upon his back, and left him the pony to come on with as well as he could.

Having eaten our fox, we left the place to try for another, and met the field scrambling in, in various plights. A friend of Bob's met us, covered with sand from his head to his knees. "Hulloa!" said Bob, "where the dickens have you been, Coxe? One would think you had been rabbiting." "Why," he said, "I have only had a bit of a noser into a sand bank. Not liking the look of the brook, I turned short away from the meadows, and, like a fool, went at a five-barred gate, up hill, with a blown horse, into a sandy field. A *pip* was

the consequence, and it took me some little time to get the sand out of my eyes; that's all." "And enough too, for once; your own mother wouldn't know you." "But where's the fox, Bob?" "There," pointing to the hounds. "Come, none of your nonsense; I won't have that." "Well, then, you shall have this, if you are a good boy," holding up the brush.

In the check which occurred will be seen the necessity for leaving hounds alone when, with a burning scent, they are suddenly brought to a stand. In nine cases out of ten, the fox is then behind them. In this instance the hounds knew he was not forward, and by their looks and manner I was at once decided that he was close to them somewhere. Had a wild huntsman at that time come up, and taken the hounds away to make a cast, nothing more, in all probability, would have been heard or seen of this fox. A good pack of hounds will not throw up as long as the scent is before them, but will be trying on, even should difficulties be in their way. My friend Bob used to remark of a fast huntsman, who hunted a neighbouring country to ours, "First came the fox, then the huntsman, and after him the hounds." This system prevails rather too much in the present day, and the hounds, instead of playing first fiddle, are considered worthy only to take a subordinate part.

It is highly desirable for a huntsman to be so well acquainted with his country as to know the run of a fox; but as long as his hounds can carry on the scent, he has no right to interfere, except in particular cases. In my palmy days, when I was generally in at the death, I never allowed a fox to be taken from the hounds. The farce of treeing was never resorted to. I think it made the

hounds more eager; and first come first served being the order of the day, the tail hounds pressed more forward when their game was sinking. This may be considered by many an old-fashioned fancy. It was, however, my usual practice for many years, and my hounds were second to none in their performances during that period. They were expert carvers also. We had only two more days in Mr. Slowman's country; one a woodland affair, when we ran a fox to ground late in the day, after changing and chopping about with half a dozen; getting him out was impracticable, as he had saved himself in the main earths, which struck me had been opened for that purpose.

When a fox has run to ground, many are in a great hurry to take the hounds away; and I have known this carried to so great an extent, that the hounds would at last scarcely mark a fox to ground. Some of the best chases often end in this manner, the disappointment being greater to the hounds than to any other party concerned. The least one can do is to allow them a certain time at the earth; and I think it is of great service to hounds to dig a fox out occasionally, when the place is not a very stronghold. I had always a few terriers, which lived with the hounds, and ran with them also. They had been many years in the family, and were fast as well as good. They were capital at bolting a fox, but if he would not bolt, they would invariably kill him. I had two of these out with me one day, when we ran a fox into a drain in our home country. The youngest dog was in first, but not being able to get to the fox's head, held him by the brush. The old dog was so near that the whipper-in seized him by the tail, and, cheering

him as usual, to bring him out, began gradually pulling him back. Great was Jim's astonishment when he found that the old dog, seeing he could not reach the fox, had seized hold of the other dog's tail, which he held firmly and would not let go; and in this way all three were hauled out, amidst the laughter and cheers of those standing round.

Upon another occasion, we had run a fox to the mouth of a large drain, which led from a gentleman's house to the brink of a large brook. We were, of course, obliged to take the hounds away at once. A couple of hounds were missing, and not making their appearance the next morning, I sent the whipper-in down to the drain, to see if he could make them out. He returned with the intelligence that they could not be there, as he had listened for some time attentively at the drain, and could not hear anything. The servants also informed him it was too small to admit a hound high up. The hounds not returning home, I was not satisfied, and sent the whipper-in again the next morning, with my compliments to the owner of the mansion, and begged his permission to uncover the drain at certain places. This was kindly granted, and it was done so effectually, as my man thought, that no hound could be there.

At that time I had an engagement from home, and left it in my whipper-in's hands; but on my return a week had elapsed, and still no tidings of the missing hounds, which were two favourite bitches. I could not get them out of my head day or night, and still my thoughts would run upon that drain. On the ninth day I again sent for the whipper-in, and told him I would have the drain opened from bottom to top, as I was now

satisfied in my own mind, that the hounds were there. "Oh, Sir," he said, "that's impossible; they cannot be there, I am certain." "Then," I said, "I am as certain they are. Go directly; get the keeper and another man with him, and my orders are, that they shall not come home again without the hounds. There they are, and I will have them out, dead or alive. Not another word—away." My friend, the owner of the mansion, humanely interested himself in the fate of the hounds, and told my men, "they might dig away anywhere, as long as they did not pull the house down." The keeper, being a young and powerful fellow, with others willing to help on such an occasion, worked away for that, the ninth day after they had been lost, and slept in the village near that night. He resumed his search early the following morning, and saw traces of the hounds having gone up the drain. This gave him fresh courage, and, sinking a deep hole, nearly at the head of the drain, there to his delight, he found both the hounds, and alive! Being a sensible fellow, he put them directly before a fire, and rubbed them well over, giving them some warm milk and water to drink, but nothing to eat. In an hour after he gave them some more milk and water, with a little sopped bread in it. He then borrowed a light cart, and brought them home in triumph.

So much for perseverance, or obstinacy, as some may call it; but, when once satisfied in my own judgment upon any point, I was never diverted from it by the opinions of others. The fable of the old man and his ass, which I read when a boy, has always been fresh in my memory. Listen attentively to good advice when offered; but every man ought to be the best judge whe-

ther it will suit his own case. With great care, these two hounds, which had been under the earth for nine days, and so unexpectedly rescued alive, recovered, and lived for some years afterwards in my kennels, and lived to enjoy their *otium cum dignitate* when too old to work. In the fore leg of one, the flesh was separated quite down to the bone, from what cause I could never tell, except from the hound licking or sucking it to sustain life. So much for underground work. In my next I shall resume my adventures *sub Jove frigido*.

LETTER XIX.

Our last fixture had now been made in Mr. Slowman's country. The day was propitious, and our lucky star in the ascendant. We found our fox early, and had a capital fifty minutes, and killed him handsomely. This ended our month's hunting in my friend's country. With the exception of one day only, when we ran to ground, we killed every fox we found. "Now, gentlemen," I said, "I must wish you a long farewell. My hounds have forty miles to travel home to-morrow, and although it is still early, I am sorry I cannot draw for another fox. We have finished well, and I always like to leave well alone." All pressed me to draw again, and my friend said it was a slow thing leaving off so early in the day. "Very likely," I replied, "but fast or slow it must be done upon this occasion. I shall not draw another inch."

We hear occasionally of hounds being out of luck, and not being able to kill their foxes. Some reference was made in *Bell's Life* of December 28th, 1850, to the bad sport attending the Durham Hunt, and a subscriber adds, that "perhaps some other gentleman connected with the hunt may suggest some remedy for the improvement of their sport." It just occurred to me upon reading this account, that it might *possibly* be the case—I

do not say it is—that the suggestion of remedies to the master of their pack may, by the barest possibility, have produced this very state of things so much to be deprecated.

The manager of a subscription pack has no sinecure at any time; but if he allows all or any of his subscribers to interfere in the management, he is only attempting that, which many more—like himself—have before attempted, with one inevitable result: that in trying to please all, he will fail to please any. The fable of the old man and his ass over again. The master of a pack of foxhounds should exercise his own discretion, and if his own abilities are not sufficient to produce sport, without the interference of others, he had much better resign his post. I would also suggest to subscribers to leave their master unshackled, and independent of any restrictions. For his own credit he will do the best he can to afford sport, but it is out of his power at all times to command success. Patience and perseverance will, however, prevail in the long run. A run of ill luck will sometimes set in even with a good pack of hounds, without any fault either in them, the master, or the men.

How to get out of it is the next question. When hounds are out of blood, as the term is, they become dispirited and lack that energy and perseverance in the chase which are indispensable requisites to effect that desideratum in fox-hunting—a successful issue in the death of the fox. In such a case the hounds should be highly fed to begin with, and long days particularly avoided. The best plan to blood them is to leave some of the lesser earths open, and if you can mark a fox to ground, dig him out and give him to the hounds upon

the spot. They should then be taken home immediately, no matter what the day or hour. They should not hunt again for three days; if in low condition a week would not be too long a rest. By selecting upon the next occasion the most favourite place for killing a fox, and where there is little chance of changing, you may probably succeed in catching another. Should this be the case, the hounds ought to return to the kennel. Do not let them draw again if they are ever so eager. To keep them in spirits they must be above their work, and you must not allow them to draw for a second fox after two o'clock. Long and unsatisfactory days are exceedingly prejudicial to hounds, even when in high feather; what, then, must their effect be upon those which are already dispirited? Make as short days, and as short work with the foxes, as you possibly can, and leave off when successful. Your hounds will then soon recover themselves, and repay you for your indulgence.

Some countries are much more difficult to catch foxes in than others, and a great deal depends upon how the country is hunted. A large country, which is not regularly hunted, is much more easy to kill foxes in than one regularly hunted. Foxes which are not disturbed oftener perhaps than once a month become, of course, fat and out of condition, and fall an easy prey to a pack of hounds in good heart and wind. The number of foxes' noses on the kennel door is no criterion of sport.

I was once asked to take my hounds into a country which had been lying idle for some time, and what was the result? that we killed every fox we found; but as for sport, we might as well have been rabbit-hunting with beagles. Foxes, to show sport, should be kept

moving. Masters of hounds seldom complain of too many foxes—it is a fault on the right side, and soon remedied; but it requires great attention and care on the part of the huntsman and whipper-in to prevent their hounds changing, which will invariably be the case where game is plentiful. A hunted fox and a blown deer are two distinct animals as to their scent at that particular period. The first diminishes as the other increases in the chase. Although foxes in the same country very much resemble each other, there are not two exactly alike, and this, as well as other appearances which distinguish the hunted fox, will direct in some measure both huntsman and whipper-in. Where foxes are too numerous, by hunting the same covert once a week they will soon disperse, or you may have the earths *put to* in the morning, instead of being stopped over-night. When I have had several foxes on foot in the same covert, I have also opened the earths, to let some of them in. It is better, I think, to do this, than rattle a favourite place too often; for, unless centrally situated, your foxes may be driven away into another country, or, by seeking shelter in hedgerows, be killed by shooters or coursers.

No animal is more shy than a fox; they soon shift their quarters, when disturbed, and although they may visit the same covert *in the night* from which they have been driven by hounds, they will not lie there during the day for some time to come. Old foxes, in particular, are difficult to find when the regular hunting season commences.

I remember having a most severe run with a good old fox, which saved its life in a rabbit pipe, and by the entreaties of a friend who was up at the finish he was

not given up to the hounds. At the time I remarked that the probability was we should not find him again, even if he survived the dressing we had given him that day, neither was it fair towards the hounds, who were then thirty miles from their kennel. This fox we found at nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, in some woodlands, where he hung for half an hour; he then broke away over a fine grass vale, and crossed the open downs for several miles, where our horses were sadly beaten, some obliged to stop entirely. Upon leading my horse down the last hill off the downs I saw the hounds running their fox in view into a small fir plantation, and I of course concluded they had him. Hearing the hounds baying, I did not hurry myself, thinking it was all over. Upon reaching the spot, however, I found that the fox, in jumping the bank, had rushed into a single rabbit pipe, which only extended through it, and so close was he to the hounds, that he bit their noses when trying to grub him out. Under such circumstances, there was only one thing to do, but I was fool enough for once in my life to listen to the suggestions of a friend, and spare this fox, at the expense of my hounds, who had so well deserved him; they had then to travel home thirty weary miles in a dark cold night. This fox I had viewed several times before he broke covert.

I never found him again until *two years* afterwards, although constantly and regularly hunting the same country. He then gave us the most sharp, short, and decisive run which, perhaps, ever occurred to a pack of hounds. Our fixture upon this occasion was made to draw a small but thick gorse covert on the downs, and the place of meeting being within distance of two or

three hunts, the muster was a full one. Two or three well-known masters of foxhounds honouring us with their presence, our hounds were of course well looked over and scrutinized by those supposed to be great judges and connoisseurs in everything pertaining to the noble science. The remarks made were conveyed to me through a friend, who was anxious to hear the opinions expressed by these great authorities, and kept company with them for that purpose. One observed that they were a monstrous fine pack of hounds to look at, but that they could hardly get into the gorse, much less push a fox out of it. Another, that they might do very well in a heavy vale country, but were out of place on the downs, as they could not have speed enough from their size to catch a fox in the open. "Well, gentlemen," said my friend, "I have an idea you will alter your opinion very soon, when the squire gives the signal for the performance to commence."

At a wave of my hand every hound was in the gorse in a minute, and it began to shake again. "By Jove," exclaimed a Leicestershire squire, "how those big brutes rattle the furze! they would shake a tomtit out of it; but they can't go the pace, I think." In a few minutes some sharp quick tongues were heard, and the hounds jumping and dashing over the gorse with a brace of foxes before them. My orders were to stop the hounds on our side of the country should a fox break at that point, and follow the fox on the other side towards my neighbour's country, who was himself out. This was efficiently done by Jim, and the hounds clapped on to the fox which had gone away on the opposite side, both having broken nearly at the same moment. Before, however,

the hounds could get together, the start had been made by some furious riders, who went away at once with the fox, the hounds having to thread their way through the horses. The race then began in earnest, and I never shall forget the scene as long as I live. About a hundred and fifty horsemen were at once scattered over the downs, riding at the top of their speed, in almost all directions; some following the hounds, but a greater number, not liking the undulating nature of the ground, cutting corners, and hustling each other by cross riding.

The falls were terrific, even on this fine elastic turf. One man I met who had such a stunning purl, that he was actually riding back again, not knowing in what direction the hounds were going. But I had no time to make further observations, being thoroughly occupied with my own horse, which I had some trouble to steer over this deceitful ground. A youngster on a thorough bred passed me with a loose rein, and the spurs digging into his horse's sides. "You will kill your horse at that rate," I exclaimed; "and it is of little use, for no fox can hold this pace much longer." "I don't care," he said, "but if I can't be first I won't be last." "No fear of that, if you only look behind you, and see what a cavalcade there is in the rear." At that time there was one long extended line of horses, as far as the eye could reach. The Leicestershire squire, who was now cutting corners, having deserted the hounds, rode with me some part of the run. "Is this fast enough for you?" I inquired, "you see these big lumbering brutes can run a little sometimes. I thought you, at least, would keep them company." "I admit," he replied, "that I never saw hounds go faster; but, unluckily, I am on my *vale*

horse." "Lay an emphasis on the *e*, and you are right; but how came you with a vale horse on the downs?"

Keeping my eye forward on the hounds, for ride to them I could not, I saw the leading hounds turn the fox on the summit of the hill, as far as I could see, a good mile or two in advance, and I got up in order about No. 12. My young friend on the thorough-bred was before me, but he had completely beaten his poor mare, which never came out again. The two first up were light weights, on thorough-bred horses also. We stood for half an hour, I think, on the summit of the hill, watching the arrival of the field, who came flocking in gradually, in various plight and humour. The distance we had run was computed at about five miles, and the time occupied in performing it, by the *time keepers*, *twelve minutes*. All admitted (and there were some *jealous* ones out) that it was the fastest thing they had ever witnessed.

The fox we had killed was the identical old gentleman whom we had given such a dusting to two years before; and he was caught on the point of the hill which he had run over on that occasion, when saving his life in the rabbit pipe. Even in this short skurry many had so effectually blown and harassed their horses, that they declined any further exhibition on that day, and went home.

We were more than twenty miles from the kennel; but, having a large field out, I determined to give them another rattler, if I could. The fox from which the hounds had been stopped in the morning, I calculated upon meeting with again, neither was I disappointed. Following upon the line which I considered he had taken,

we came down upon him in a small fir plantation, just on the verge of the downs, and race No. 2 commenced in right good earnest. The ground, however, was more difficult for horses, and the hounds had it pretty much their own way, as before, running up and down and round the hill for about fifteen minutes, when they finished this fox also off-hand.

Running over open downs is all very well as a variety. It shows also the speed of the hounds; but for sport give me a vale country, with variety of ground, where the good quality of a pack of hounds may be seen to more advantage. A good woodland day is, in my estimation, far preferable to the fastest skurry over naked turf. In one case hounds have only to go as fast as their legs can carry them; in the other, their noses and staunchness have the severest trial. Although in the first part of this letter I have recommended short days and short work to a pack of hounds out of blood, yet with hounds in good heart and condition great liberties may be taken, and the day ought never to be too long. No pack of hounds ever did harder work or travelled longer distances than my own; but then they were of my own breeding, selected with care from the very best blood, which was always the first point of consideration with me, and conspicuous for high courage and lasting qualities. They were large hounds, with plenty of bone and muscle, and good legs and feet. The dogs averaged 25 and 26 inches in height, and the bitches 24. In the fast thing we had over the downs a bitch, standing full 25 inches, took the lead the whole distance. Many opinions were expressed adversely to such hounds doing their work in a woodland and hilly country; but I never

knew any one come out with us, and return home dissatisfied. In our hilly country, especially, the hounds invariably beat the horses, and in woodlands they would dash and spring over the short stuff like greyhounds; fences and gates also they took flying.

In the kennel they were savage, and would not be struck with impunity. The whipper-in one day, whilst I was absent, thought proper to exercise his whip among them, which they resented by turning upon him, and he was obliged to fly over the palings, one of the hounds tearing off the skirt of his coat, as he was scrambling over. On another occasion the old kennel huntsman applied the thong rather unceremoniously to one of the hounds, which he had by himself, when he turned upon him, and, catching him by the coat collar, pulled him down on his back. The dog did not attempt to injure him further. There was one particularly cross and savage with the other hounds, and, catching him one day fighting and quarrelling, I called the other hounds out of the kennel, and resolved to make him know better. I laid the whip upon him sharply; but, at every cut I gave him, he jumped at me, with his bristles up, as savage as a lion. Seeing I might kill but could not subdue him, I threw the whip down on the floor, and, holding out my hand, called him to me by name. He immediately approached, with his bristles and stern well up still, and licked the hand held out to him. The lesson was never forgotten by me. I adopted afterwards the plan of separating at night the most quarrelsome, but in the summer it was difficult to keep them from fighting without constant and long exercise. More, however, was done by the voice than the whip, which I found only

made them more irritable. With kind words they would do anything, and, as I always made pets of them, their tractability was shown in various ways.

I used to put my boy of about five years old on some of their backs, to ride about; and it was amusing to see what kicks and cuffs they would take from him in the greatest good humour. Do what he would with them, they never showed any disposition to be out of temper, and seemed proud of carrying him about.

The characters of high-bred foxhounds are seldom sufficiently understood or appreciated. Of all dogs they are the highest in courage and generosity, and capable of great attachment. Huntsmen, generally, use them as a body without any individual characteristics, and as long as they answer to their names in the kennel, and do their work in the field, give little more attention to them. I used to study their characters, and make them attached to me as spaniels, by kindness and good humour. Sometimes they accompanied me in the summer, without any whipper-in, and did just as they liked. They would run on before me some distance, but always looked back to see if I was coming, and when we arrived at any cross roads they waited until I came up, to see which road I meant to take; then, jumping round my horse, set off again at half speed, romping and playing in high good humour.

I have travelled for miles with them without any whipper-in, but no hound would ever linger behind or leave me. In the hunting season, also, I frequently returned home in dark nights, with only one whipper-in behind me, and we were always once a week nearly twenty miles from home when we left off hunting, seldom reaching

the kennel before nine o'clock. Some nights I could scarcely see my horse's head before me, much less the hounds, but they never would go far from me, until I approached the last field near the kennel, when the horn sounding my approach, they scampered on to the kennel door, and there waited until I dismounted. Huntsmen and whippers-in are all too fond of discipline or the lash, for that they look upon as the only means of enforcing obedience. No opinion can be more erroneous; kind treatment would save themselves much unnecessary trouble, and their hounds often barbarous usage. Nothing made me more angry than to see a whipper-in strike a hound unnecessarily in the field. With both horses and dogs I have invariably found that kind words will have a more powerful effect than hard blows.

LETTER XX.

ALTHOUGH Beckford has been and still is considered the first authority on hunting matters, yet I cannot subscribe to his doctrine upon some points, neither can his theory and practice be admitted to be consistent. In one of his letters he states that his chief object in writing was to prevent the improper use of discipline, and that "we ought not to suffer unnecessary severity to be used with an animal to whom we are obliged for so much diversion."

Upon feeding hounds he remarks, "All hounds (more especially young ones) should be called over often in the kennel, and most huntsmen practise this lesson as they feed their hounds; they flog them while they feed them, and if they have not always a bellyful one way, they seldom fail to have it the other." Instead of condemning so monstrous and barbarous a practice, of which any huntsman who could be guilty ought himself to have been flogged at the cart-tail, he coolly remarks, "It is not, however, my intention to oppose so general a practice, in which there may be some utility. I shall only observe, that it should be used with discretion, lest the whip should fall heavily in the kennel on such as never deserve it in the field." Very milk-and-water indeed. I can only say that a man who would flog hounds in this manner, and at feeding time, above all other times of

the day, is a proper subject to come under Mr. Martin's Act, and the treadmill is his only fit place.

He remarks again, that "Such hounds as are notorious offenders should also feel the lash and hear a rate as they go to the covert; it may be a useful *hint* to them, and may prevent a severer flogging afterwards." It strikes me as a monstrous absurdity, and a most wanton piece of cruelty as well, to allow a whipper-in to cut a hound nearly in two, as some of these gentry will do, when the dog is committing no fault at all, but quietly walking to the covert side, and in the presence of the huntsman, *where he is entitled to protection!*

When a hound is caught, *flagrante delicto*, in the actual commission of the crime of running riot, then, and then only, should he be punished; he then knows for what he is corrected; but to punish a hound, in cold blood, for no fault at all, and only as a hint of what he is to expect, is, in my humble opinion, a most cruel and unwarrantable act.

A boy may as well be flogged at school, merely because his master thinks he may commit some fault during the day. When a senior at school I once witnessed the effect of too much severity upon rather a dull boy, whose failure was only in ability, not in disposition, to learn. He had a task set him by the master, in which occurred one hard word which he could not pronounce correctly, and having been beaten for it, he either committed the same fault again, or stopped at it, and began crying. Out of school this boy was of a cheerful and good temper, but he was frightened at his lessons. The master, being out of patience with his stupidity, handed him over to me to teach him his task. He went on tolerably

well until he arrived at the hard word, when he broke down as usual, and began crying, thinking I should thrash him. "What's the matter, Tom," I said. "Oh!" he replied, "indeed I cannot pronounce that word right." "Well," I said "don't cry about it; I shall not strike you for not knowing. You have done very well up to that point. Leave that word out entirely; I don't care about it; skip it; there's an end of it." We got on very well in this way for some days, but I never allowed him to attempt this word; it was always passed over by my orders. His task was a long one, to be repeated before the holidays, and I had it over tolerably often, to make sure, for I was anxious he should not fail under my instruction. I treated him with kindness and encouragement, but never got out of temper, or spoke harshly. The consequence was that the hard word soon fell in with the rest, and he went through his whole task at the appointed time without missing a word. The bugbear had disappeared.

I have seen horses in like manner shy on the road at a heap of stones or other things; and what is the reason of it? Because some lout, on his first shying at them, has ridden him up (as I have often seen done) to the stones, and there beaten him. The next time the horse shies again, not for fear of the stones, but for fear of the beating. A very excellent sportsman, who was for many years a most efficient master of foxhounds, used to tell me that he never gave himself any trouble about his young hounds running riot, but let them have it out, as long as they did not taste blood. He said, from not being encouraged, they soon found out their mistake, and always became more steady afterwards. It is said,

“forbidden fruit is always the best,” and I suppose my worthy friend was of the same opinion. His practice, if rather objectionable, was certainly less so than knocking a hound’s head nearly off for committing no fault at all — *Medio tutissimus ibis*.

Whoever begins hunting a new country, with a new pack of hounds got together from different kennels, must expect to meet with difficulties and disappointments, and little else for the first season. A lot of hounds and a pack of hounds are two distinct things, as any novice will soon discover to his cost. I have, however, seen sport occasionally with such, but, being mostly of an accidental nature, it will not last. Hounds ignorant of their country, and unacquainted with each other, cannot fairly be expected to do much, although very often much is required of them. A new master of hounds, also, unless he has already been broken in to his business, has a very difficult card to play. A man may have ridden half his life after hounds, and be considered a good sportsman, but the management of an establishment is altogether another affair; he must make up his mind at once, therefore, for rough usage, hard work, and few thanks. He will find plenty of would-be masters in the field, and the chances are, that his huntsman will also be master at home in the kennel, and his stud-groom master in the stable. If master himself in his own house, he may think himself tolerably well off. *Domus et placens uxor* is a sure and happy relief after all the toils and troubles of a hard day are over. Should the last of these blessings be denied him, the office of a railway porter is a sinecure in comparison with his.

It is, no doubt, with many, a very fine thing to be

placed at the head of affairs in a country, which position masters of foxhounds are supposed by their brother fox-hunters to occupy, and many an aspirant for this high ambition has soon found his vanity oozing out—like Falstaff's courage—at his fingers' ends, when he comes "to pay the piper." Unless a man is really fond of hounds—that is, of the dogs themselves—and takes an interest in all they do, from the moment they find a fox in the morning, and rides with them, not for the sake of riding, but because he takes delight in witnessing every cast or hit they make, he had better take my advice, and leave others to keep hounds, who do. From my own experience, accompanied with many more kicks than kisses, and after a hard campaign in many a well fought field, with victorious results, nearly thirty years' probation may entitle me to give a little advice to others. It is this—never keep a subscription pack of foxhounds. I may even add—never keep foxhounds at all. Why, then, write about fox-hunting? He who has ever ridden a runaway, hard-pulling horse may possibly understand that, as he could not *pull him up*, the next most satisfactory thing to know was that he could *guide him*.

I am not like a merry rider, who once attempting a wide impracticable old hollow lane, which had only the appearance of a common fence, fell in, horse and self, of course. Another, following in his wake, shared the same fate; but, when landed safely at the bottom, began hallooing out. "Hold your tongue, you fool!" exclaimed the first occupant, "we shall have the place full presently, and then we may get out—there is no chance without it." I do not wish to entice others to follow my example, but as I know it will be done (in keeping

hounds, I mean only), I will give them the next best advice I can—how to get well out of it.

Now, then, to the purpose. Let him who is about to commence the arduous enterprise of managing a subscription pack of foxhounds sit quietly down first and make a cool calculation upon paper of what his expenses are likely to be, and put everything down at the outside figure. It is like making an estimate for building a house; the *extras* will amount to at least a third of the specified sum. According to the country, and the number of days he has to hunt per week, must his establishment of horses and hounds be. For himself or his huntsman he must begin with three good made hunters. A huntsman should be well mounted upon good and *steady* horses, for he will have quite enough to do in looking after his hounds to mind much what his horse is about. I am speaking now economically; how things may be done respectably, yet efficiently, and without any profuse expenditure. A good judge of horses may pick up good and serviceable animals at the end of the season, quite good enough for any provincial country, for sixty guineas each, or less money, if he has his wits about him. As we cannot afford a second horse in the field, we must buy such only as have good legs and feet, powerful frames to stand wear and tear, and small heads, well-bred ones also. For the whippers-in purchase young horses of four or five years old. They are better than old screws or twenty-five-pounders, inasmuch as they will improve in value as the others decrease.

The cub-hunting season is a capital opportunity for breaking in young horses. If bad tempers, take care your men are not bad tempers also, or they will make

bad work of it. I have had and ridden as bad-tempered horses as any man ever possessed, but by quiet usage they became to me valuable hunters, and their dispositions were decidedly altered. In my hard riding days I never used spur or whip. All was done by the voice alone. The country I rode over was as severe as ever was crossed—double ditches, with stiff hedges and high banks. At these I always pulled up a little before reaching them, to allow my horse the opportunity of taking them in his own way. At brooks I went faster, but at gates and walls the rein was always pulled, as at heavy fences. By this plan my falls in a season were very few, nor was my horse blown. A deer, which can jump higher than any other animal, although going ever so fast, will generally slacken his pace before taking a high fence, and approaches it in a trot. This should be a lesson to hard riders. I have seen some few in my time, and rattling falls they would get, when, by going so fast at their fences, the wind was pumped out of their horses. It is not to gratify any egotistical feelings that I state I have ridden over as high and bad fences as any man ever attempted, and never turned away from anything that came in my way, which was at all practicable; and all this was done without whip or spur.

In my treatment of horses I took a leaf out of the Arab's book. My own horses were never ridden by another person. When I went into the stable, I took something with me to give them, a piece of bread or an apple, of which they were very fond, or I gave them a feed of corn—patting their necks and talking to them the while. So accustomed were they to be told what to do, and so well did they understand me, that if I told them

to walk into a brook or river, which I could not jump, they would do so without hesitation, or follow me, when dismounted, into or over anything. I never could afford a second horse in the field, and our days in the season were long and generally severe ones. For three days a week I had only three horses, and my men also had three each. We never exceeded this number and never required more. I have before stated that each horse had a loose stall or box to himself, in which *always* stood a large double-sized bucket of water, night and morning. We never gave physic unless absolutely required. Condition balls, urine balls, and all such trash, were not even known.

I had a capital groom, who was always in the stable by five o'clock every morning, even in the depth of winter. He was fond of the horses, remarkable for a kind and unruffled disposition, and never neglected his duty. Upon our return from hunting, every horse had his bucket of thick gruel directly he came into the stable, and a little hay to eat whilst he was being cleaned. We never gave any corn until just before littering down, the last thing at night. The horse's legs were plunged into a high bucket of warm water, and if dirty, soft soap was used. The first leg being washed, was sponged as dry as possible, and then bandaged with thick woollen bandages until the others were washed; the bandages were then *removed entirely*, and the legs rubbed by hand until quite dry. We used the best old white potato oats, weighing usually 45lbs. per bushel, but so *few beans* that a quarter lasted us *a season*. The oats were bruised, and a little sweet hay chaff mixed with them. We also gave our horses a few carrots the day after hunting, to

cool their bodies, or a bran mash or two. They were never coddled up in hoods, or half a dozen rugs at night, but a single blanket sufficed, which was never so tight but that you might thrust your hand easily under it. This was a thing I always looked to myself, when paying a visit to the stable the last thing at night. A tired horse should have everything comfortable about him, but carefully avoid any tight bandage round the body. In over-reaches or wounds, warm water was our first application, and plenty of it, to clean all dirt or grit from the wound; then Fryer's balsam and brandy, with a clean linen bandage. Our usual allowance of corn to each horse per diem was four quarterns, but more if they required it, and from 14lbs. to 16lbs. of hay, eight of which were given at night, at racking-up time, about eight o'clock. Our hours of feeding were about five in the morning, a feed of corn, bruised, with a little hay chaff; the horse then went to exercise. At eight o'clock, 4lbs. of hay; twelve o'clock, feed of corn; two o'clock, 2lbs. of hay; four o'clock, corn; at six o'clock, another feed of corn, with chaff; and at eight o'clock, 8lbs. of hay; water they could always drink when they wanted it. The day after hunting, I should add, our horses were kept as quiet as possible, their boxes littered down with plenty of straw, the stable darkened, and the key of it in the groom's pocket.

It is a very simple process to make young dogs handy. First give them names, and make them understand them. If you can find time to feed them yourself, do so, calling them by name to their food; if not, take them out walking with you every day for an hour or two; put some hard biscuits in your pocket, give the dog a few bits at

starting, call him by name occasionally when running forward, and every time he returns to you when called, give him a piece of biscuit; pat him and caress him the while. Follow this lesson for a week or ten days, and the dog will soon begin not only to know but to love his master. Young dogs should always be fed twice a day—morning and evening. There are some persons to whom dogs become more readily attached than to others. The eye and the voice are a terror to some, as they are also an attraction to other animals. A soft eye, beaming with gentleness and good temper, is a point to which the instinct of the canine race naturally directs them, nor are they often deceived in its expression. Kind and benevolent looks have as great an influence over the animal as they have over the human species. They are, moreover, a sure criterion of temper.

The best food for all sporting dogs is old oatmeal, boiled until it is as thick as a stiff rice pudding; then reduce it, by adding either milk or broth. Pot liquor is very heating, and not fit for dogs which work hard. Sheeps' paunches, also, well washed, and boiled afterwards, are most heartening food, mixed with a little oatmeal. In fact, I should select this as the very best and most nutritious of anything that can be given to them, and the liquor they are boiled in is not heating, like pot liquor. Sporting dogs, after a hard day, should have their feet washed in warm water, with a little salt added; their food should be given warm, but not hot; and they should be placed in a warm, comfortable kennel, with plenty of clean straw. If wet, they should be rubbed dry. Nothing restores a dog so quickly as warmth.

A dog's state of health may be known by his nose.

If dry, and pinched in appearance, the system is fevered by over-warmth, or other causes. If moist and spongy, it is a sure sign of good health. Sporting dogs, if fed and taken care of as I have suggested, will (if not lamed, or overworked so much as to refuse their food) be fit to work again on the next or following day. Dogs, like horses, require training by moderate and regular exercise, before they can fairly be expected to undergo severe work. Sheeps' trotters are also very excellent food, when the bones are picked out. Dogs fed upon raw flesh are not fit to work until the next day after, and scarcely then. Barley meal, scalded with boiling water, and then covered over in a pan for half an hour before used, with some skim milk afterwards added, will do very well; but it is more heating and does not contain the strengthening properties of oatmeal. Indian meal may also do as a makeshift, when boiled for half an hour. Dogs should have always a pan of clean water before them, day and night, winter and summer. When feverish, give them half a small tea spoonful of yellow sulphur and half of cream of tartar, mixed up in some butter or lard, at night. This dose once a week will keep a dog in health; it may be given twice a week if he is feverish.

LETTER XXI.

WE are recommended by Beckford never to take out hounds on very bad or stormy days. The advice is good, but the misfortune is that in these times we cannot follow it. Were any master of foxhounds at liberty to consult his own individual opinion, or the welfare of his hounds, he would not, from choice, make his appearance at the covert side upon certain days which preclude almost the possibility of sport, independently of their unfavourable influence upon his hounds. In these times of rapid transit from place to place, many take advantage of the railroad to convey themselves and horses long distances to a favourite fixture, with a good pack of hounds. Others select the fixed day as a day of recreation from business. Others, again, invite their friends to their houses, in the expectation of their having a day's sport with the foxhounds. For these and other reasons the master is considering the convenience and amusement of the public, without reference or regard to his own judgment or private feelings on the subject. In short, whether keeping hounds solely at his own expense, or as managing a subscription pack, the master is considered in the light of a servant of the public. Such is the transition which has taken place since the days of Beckford.

A stormy day, with a high wind, is particularly unfavourable to sport, and injurious even to a good pack of hounds. Wild weather makes wild hounds. Upon such a day, young hounds, even if steady up to that time, will run riot, and old hounds commit excesses. In large woodlands, the whipper-in, unless keeping under the wind and close to the hounds, cannot tell what they are about, and wilful hounds seize the opportunity of following the bent of their own inclination, and often throw the whole pack into confusion. Both huntsman and whipper-in must be particularly alert on such an occasion, or the hounds may slip down wind, and be away, without their being aware of their having left the covert. Avoid, if possible, drawing large coverts at all on a very stormy day; but if unavoidable, take out a short pack of hounds—sixteen or eighteen couples only. Select your oldest and steadiest, and if you wish to keep your pack steady, leave any doubtful characters at home, and *all your young hounds*. On such a day recollect that young hounds *can be of no service*, and you run an almost certain risk of *unsettling them* from any previous steadiness they may have acquired.

The scent is often so *queer* (it is the best term I can employ to express my meaning) in boisterous weather, that I have known the steadiest hounds unable to distinguish the scent of a fox from that of a hare. I remember a very steady and favourite hound running a hare scent on one of these riotous days; nor did he appear to know he was doing wrong. To similar facts the experience of old masters of hounds and huntsmen will, I have no doubt, add corroborative testimony.

Many a time have I sallied forth into this war of ele-

ments, when you would hardly turn a cat out of doors, to keep my appointment, and upon many an occasion not half a dozen made their appearance to greet us at the place of meeting. I went one day to a fixture nearly twenty miles from the kennels in such torrents of rain that we were drenched to the skin long before our arrival at the covert side. One solitary individual was there to meet us, who looked like a drowned rat. He was, of course, a very zealous sportsman. "Rather a damp morning," he observed, "and I anticipate a short gathering." "My opinion is," I replied, "that I could water my horse out of my boots, and as to the field, I think it very probable that you will be its sole representative, and not a bad one, upon this occasion." "Well," he said, "what's to be done?" "Wait a little longer, to see if a third fool makes his appearance, as there is no chance of our being wetter than we are at present." We therefore stuck up under a hedge for another quarter of an hour, when no other horseman joining, I said, "*you* are now the field, and as you have had the boldness to turn out in such weather, your hardihood shall be rewarded. I am ready to begin drawing, for standing still won't suit me any longer." "I have been debating the question," he replied, "and although I should like a warming uncommonly just now, it is very selfish to disturb that fine covert on such a day as this, merely to gratify my own feelings, when there is no one else out to join in the sport. No, that won't do, so the only thing we have to do is to go home and go to bed." Shaking hands we parted, he for a six mile gallop, I for a weary ride through heavy roads and splashing lanes, of twenty miles.

The *enjoyment* of sport upon such occasions is almost out of the question; but I have known good runs, and even a good scent, when everything appeared to dispute it. Upon one occasion, when taking my hounds into another county for a fortnight's hunting, we had a capital run. It was a very windy day, and we unfortunately had to draw a large covert, which it was difficult to traverse on horseback. On finding our fox, we kept as close to the hounds as the nature of the ground would admit of, being both hilly and abounding in rocks as well; the hounds, however, at last slipped away down wind, and we lost them entirely. Being ignorant of the country, I could not tell the run of the foxes, and we could find no traces of the hounds. We therefore separated in different directions. I got upon their line and followed them for some miles, gaining intelligence here and there of their route; but at last I lost it altogether, and could pick up no further information. It being then late I was obliged to give up all further pursuit, and return to our temporary kennel, in the hope that the whippers-in might have been more fortunate in their researches. There again I was doomed to disappointment; they had returned, after having ridden many miles, without hearing any intelligence of the hounds. It was then becoming dark, and we all three looked gloomy enough; but in a dark night and an unknown country we were obliged to wait the dawning of another day.

Before daylight we were all astir again. Some few of the hounds had returned during the night, for which the feeding-house had been left open and their food prepared; but the body of the hounds was still missing. The whippers-in were again despatched in different directions, and

as the line the hounds had taken, was towards our home country, I rode straight to the kennels, as the most likely place to find them. To my great delight, they had arrived there before me. They had run their fox into the borders of our own country, and there killed him, in a cottage where he had taken refuge. The old woman to whom it belonged had tried to eject the hounds with a broom, but so resolved were they to have their prey, that the old lady was alarmed herself, and fled, leaving them in possession. Having eaten their fox, they gave the old woman no further trouble, and marched off in good order homewards. These particulars we learnt afterwards.

After wet and stormy nights foxes are not easily met with, even where there is no scarcity of them. Much also depends upon the earth-stopper. Few of them can be depended upon to stop the earths at a *proper hour*, in wet and bad nights. This work is often done very carelessly, and foxes instead of being stopped *out*, are stopped *in*. Foxes, like dogs, are very dull and sleepy in windy weather. They seldom then leave their earths until a late hour of the night, and sometimes not at all. Often they have a supply in the larder, which prevents the necessity of their wandering about in search of food, and, like lazy people who have nothing to do, sleep the dreary hours away. I have known foxes in bad weather not move far from their earths for two or three nights following, and in the clicking season this is particularly the case.

The most impudent thing I ever knew done by a fox was whilst being pursued by my own hounds. He was running for a large head of earths, which (as our fixture

was not in that line of country) were not stopped; and although Jim strove with might and main, he could not arrive there before him, but it was so near a thing, that he was only ahead by two fields. It was bad enough to be foiled after so hard a run; but the thing which annoyed Jim the most was the coolness of Mr. Wiley—jumping into a farm yard only one field from the covert side, he seized a duck before the thresher's face, who was working in the barn, and carried him off in triumph into his earth. When I got up, Jim was looking very crestfallen. "He has beaten us, Sir, and got home, and more than that, he has taken a duck with him for supper." "Well," I said, "Jim, he has shown his sense, for the chances are this old gentleman has been stopped in a night or two occasionally by those idle earth-stoppers, and I have no doubt he has provided against this contingency." "He shan't be stopped in to-night, Sir, any way, for I will come to see that the earths are all open; but I hope the next time we meet, he won't be able to have things quite so snug."

Another duty, and not a very agreeable one, which pertains to a whipper-in's place, is his going out *at night* to see that the earth is open, where a fox has been run to ground during the day. This should never be neglected, where there are any fox stealers, and there are few counties exempt from gentlemen of this calling. The news soon spreads of a fox being run to ground at a certain place, by gentlemen returning from hunting. The poacher's ears being generally pretty sharp at hearing, and having friends perhaps on the look-out as well, he soon picks up the information as to the whereabouts, and starts for the earth to arrive there about dark. In

a bag at his back he carries a net about five feet high, with large meshes, so as to admit a fox's head to pass through them; in his pocket a few horse bells, which, when the net is set up, are tied on to it at certain distances. A low-legged terrier is his companion, and with a small spade or trowel in his shooting jacket pocket, he sets out upon his errand. Upon dark nights he has a small bull's-eye lanthorn also.

Arrived at the spot he examines the earths, and if stopped, immediately opens them with his spade or trowel. He then cuts some sticks, and sets up the net, with himself and dog inside the enclosure, and having attached the bells, proceeds to business. He first tries his dog, which, if the earth is not very deep, will often bolt the fox without further trouble. Should the place, however, prove a very stronghold, the dog, if unable to bolt the fox, will return to his master. They then lie down together on the sack to the windward side of the earths, and there pass the night. Sometimes the fox will not come at all to the mouth of the earth during the first night after he has been hunted. The poacher then stops the earths again early in the morning before daylight, and removes with his dog and nets to some convenient spot, from whence he may watch if any one visits the earth. In the evening he again returns, and having set up his net, prepares for another few hours' watch. At the turn of the night the fox generally makes his rush from the earth, and into the net; in a moment master and dog are upon him, being guided by the bells, even in the darkest night. The sack is thrown over the fox to prevent his biting; the poacher then feels for his head, and running his right hand under the sack, catches

the fox under the right ear, still holding him down; he then slips his left hand carefully under his jaws, and with his thumb over his nose his victim is secure.

In rocky countries another plan is adopted. A trap is composed of loose stones, with a stone tile to fall behind the fox; in fact, a wooden mousetrap will give a very good idea of it, except that there is no room for a fox to turn. Foxes, especially old ones, are very shy of venturing into this trap, and I have known them remain in the earth five or six days, and even longer, until quite starved out. In the country I hunted, these stone traps were constantly used by fox stealers, and many a midnight excursion have they given me and my men to knock them to pieces. Upon one occasion a lot of quarrymen, who, during a fall of snow, had some idle days, tracked a fox into a rocky earth, and set up a stone trap. Hearing of it, I sent the whipper-in to throw it down, which he did in their absence. Upon returning to the place the next day, the trap was again set up, and some men watching, who threatened to thrash Jim, which he told them one at a time they could not do, and that they knew. Have the fox they said they would, and they would thrash any man I sent, and myself into the bargain, if I interfered again.

This polite message being conveyed to me by Jim, had the effect of raising my hackles a little, and Jim was quite ready for a bit of fighting. We therefore selected half a dozen men, and, with short sticks in their hands, set out about ten o'clock at night to the scene of contention. We had about five miles to walk; the night was quite dark, and the quarrymen had taken up their position in an old cavern, in which they had lighted a fire, upon

the brow of a hill, about forty yards distant from the rock in which the fox was confined. The glare of light led us to the spot, and, reflected on the rocks below, showed us also where the trap was set up. Scrambling up through the stunted juniper bushes, we reached an overhanging crag, under which I posted my little band, and then alone ascended to reconnoitre. No sentinel was on the look out, but the voices of men were loud in the cavern. I quietly removed the stone tile, and sent the stones rolling down the hill, and in a few minutes the whole trap was broken up. I then returned to my men, and we waited for some time to see if any one came out from the cave. No one appeared; the voices sunk gradually, and the fitful and flickering light, which only at intervals lighted up the gloom, assured me that the tenants of the cave had consigned themselves to the drowsy arms of Morpheus for the remainder of the night. Our enterprise was thus brought to a successful issue without hard blows or broken heads. Our fox escaped, and great was the indignation of the quarrymen the next morning when they found "the Squire" had outmanœuvred them. To reconcile them to their disappointment, I sent them a present to drink my health, and a better look-out for themselves the next time. They took it in high good humour, and ever afterwards assisted me in preserving the foxes.

Were there no receivers there would be no thieves; but there is often found on the borders of a fox-hunting country some scratch pack of curs, miscalled harriers, which often turn down a bag fox on their high days and holidays, sometimes secretly, but generally openly, in defiance of every law and rule by which real sportsmen

should be guided. To affirm that such are or ever will be (in these unlawful aggressions upon the just prerogative of the master of foxhounds) countenanced or supported by any real gentleman or true sportsman is a calumny. No gentleman would degrade himself by practices so little according with those feelings and characteristics which distinguish as plainly his bearing in all relations of life, as the character of a high-bred foxhound is distinguished from that of a crop-eared cur. Let each man pursue his own calling, or his own favourite amusement, whether in pursuit of a fox, hare, or stag; but let him not interfere illegally and unfairly with his neighbour's sport. Never let that golden maxim be lost sight of which prescribes to all alike—"Do to others as you would they should do unto you."

To afford no grounds of excuse for any such interlopers, masters of foxhounds should hunt their country regularly, the bad and the good in succession. A contrary practice will give the disaffected good cause to murmur, and, as a certain consequence, foxes will be destroyed either by keepers and farmers, or caught by poachers. He who would keep a country well together must make up his mind to draw both bad coverts and good ones as systematically as he takes bad and good scenting days, to suit the public convenience, and if he fails *to do so* he will assuredly fail in giving general satisfaction or ensuring good sport. When the best part of a country only is regularly hunted, your best foxes will shift their quarters to more distant places, where, if undisturbed by hounds, they may remain the greater part of the hunting season, or until such time as their career is cut short by some more ignoble fate; so that in these

very bad and consequently condemned coverts often may be found the foxes which will afford the much-lauded runs of the season, if looked for in time.

When our fixture was made in the season for any bad woodlands, many of our fast men declined to show upon such occasions, and begged me to leave such odious places either for cub-hunting or the end of the season. My reply always was, "I shall take the rough and the smooth together, and for choice I will back the big woods against the spinies for a good hard running fox." By rattling them regularly, foxes would fly and afford us good chases, and I think, taking the season together, our longest and best runs were from large coverts. Our quick things, which suited only our fast men, were, however, generally from smaller places. So, to meet all parties as nearly as possible, lovers of riding, as well as lovers of hunting, I varied the scene with woodlands and spinies, and thus secured the goodwill of all, as all knew I catered for the general amusement.

LETTER XXII.

THERE is nothing more uncertain than scent—even in the words of the old song, “ A southerly wind and a cloudy sky,” do not always prove, although they may proclaim it, to be a hunting morning. Very much depends upon the state of the atmosphere, and when it is a close, and as our common term is, a *muggy day*, no matter what quarter the wind may be in, I would almost answer for its proving a good scenting one. In a misty rain, also, and often in thick fogs, scent will lie breast high. Upon the going off of a frost scent generally fails, but I have seen hounds run hard when the sleet has been actually freezing on our coats. In snow storms, also, whilst the snow is falling, the scent will often serve well, but with storms hanging over our heads there is little. High winds are destructive of scent, generally, as gentle breezes are favourable to it; but on dumb days, when there has not been a leaf stirring, I have observed there has been scarcely any scent at all. Wet days are unfavourable to a scent in covert, but it will often hold good over the open. A fine looking day, with a hot sun and keen wind, is, on the contrary, seldom productive of sport.

As variable as our climate, so variable is scent. There is no certain criterion to judge by, but I have observed, almost invariably, a good scenting day to follow the rising quicksilver. On the contrary, when the barometer is

falling, scent is generally bad. It is not my intention here to enter into a learned or lengthened dissertation on a subject which has puzzled much cleverer heads than mine ; but a few practical observations may not be out of place. The skin of all animals being porous, scent is the exhalation thrown off from the body of the animal through these pores, or, as the learned call them, the *reticulæ* of the skin. When the animal is in a quiet or quiescent state, the scent thrown off is moderate, but when the body is put into active motion, the exhalations from it escape so rapidly that they form a kind of misty halo around it ; and, as the animal runs, these particles of scent float upon the air, and, according to its temperature, become slowly or quickly dissipated.

The state of the ground has also a good deal to do with scent, but not so much, I am inclined to think, as is generally supposed. I have known a capital scent often when the earth has been as hard as a brick ; and what old sportsman has not seen hounds running hard during the month of March in a cloud of dust ? In the cub-hunting season, also, during a hot September, hounds will run breast high in coverts of *high wood*, where there is nothing to hold the scent, and the ground underneath is as dry and hard as a parched pea. Again, I must admit that when the earth has been over-saturated with rain, the finest pasture land sometimes will not hold a good scent, but it will often improve when hounds come upon lighter soil, and sometimes even over fallows. To constitute a perfect scenting day, both the ground and the air should be in a temperate state ; but, as a general rule, I would pin my faith chiefly on the state of the atmosphere.

Look again at a pack of hounds crossing a river on a good scenting day ; they throw their tongues cheerfully as they breast the torrent, but it is idle to suppose that the quickly flowing waters can hold a scent ; the water in which the fox has laved himself has long since passed away, and is hastening perhaps a mile in advance to add its tributary volume to the mighty ocean. But, gently wafted over the stream, the scent of the flying fox is borne on the soft breeze to greet the olfactory nerves of the struggling pack, and guide them to the wished-for bank. When hounds run up wind, with heads up and sterns down, the scent is said to be breast high, but it is more than that, it is *head high*—that is, the particles of scent float over the heads of the hounds as well. If not, how is it that the last hound in the pack throws his tongue as eagerly as the first. Were it only breast high, the bodies of the first few couples, interposing between the scent and their companions, would entirely absorb these floating particles, as the scent of their own bodies must overcome the scent of the fox, and render it unintelligible or unattainable to those forming the rear rank.

This may be seen in the conduct of hounds upon a bad scenting day, where there is only what we call a *pad scent* ; that is, a scent left chiefly by the *foot of the fox*. There is then no merry cry of hounds ; but the solons of the pack alone, with slow and solemn notes, proclaim the welcome news to their other mute and less sage friends, that their game is forward. See how the young and dashing spirits, ever foremost and fiercest in the fray when a burning scent calls only for the exercise of limb and tongue, now take their proper places in the rear, and wait for wiser and older heads to guide them. See with

what eagerness they press when some old warrior points out and notes the failing track. Forward they fly, with burning zeal, to aid their well-known leader; but it avails not. Too intricate the web, which wisdom and experience can alone unravel. I have seen also (and I dare say many an old sportsman can bear me testimony) hounds running hard up one side of a hedge, when the fox had gone up the other.

Foxes have been said, by some acute writers, to be good judges of scent, and therefore make themselves scarce on good scenting days, the reason assigned why they should be so being that they catch their prey by hunting. The conclusion from such premises, that a fox must therefore know a good scenting day from a bad one, as applicable to his own individual case, is not quite so comprehensible to my obtuse understanding as I could wish. It is a mystery, perhaps, appertaining to the theory of the noble science in which I am not yet sufficiently instructed myself, and therefore cannot enlighten my readers. Stoats and weasels I have seen hunting down their game, until they are entirely worn out by running; and I have seen Mr. Stoat run into his fox (*i. e.*, rabbit) in the open, as thoroughly beaten and done up as a hare before a pack of beagles; but in all my excursions, both by day and twilight, and also under the pale moon's silvery rays—although I have met Mr. Wiley occasionally “by moonlight alone,” and have seen him perform many and clever antics in various ways—I have never yet witnessed any attempts on his part to run down his game by nose. That he possesses very strongly-developed organs of smelling, I freely admit, and this will be readily granted by all who have the honour of Mr. Wi-

ley's acquaintance, without requiring Mr. De Ville to examine his pericranium, which Mr. De Ville would himself most probably decline to experiment upon, at least on the cranium of a living specimen.

I had once the folly to submit my own caput to the manipulations of this professor of the occult science of craniology, more for the satisfaction of a country friend—or acquaintance rather; for friends are *raræ aves* in all times, if you except the worshippers of Mammon, who stick close enough to a man as long as he is well to do in the world. Those two lines, which, as a boy at school I read in my *Delectus*, have often struck me in after life, as showing how true an estimate the Latin poet had formed of human nature, as applicable to all ages:—

“Donec eris felix multos numerabis amicos;
Tempora si fuerint nubila solus eris,”

which, for the benefit of those who are not acquainted with such lingo, may be translated thus:—

“Whilst sunshine lasts, you will count many noses,
But when dark clouds arise the street-door closes.”

“Not at home, Sir,” when, having seen your friend enter his house in Grosvenor Square, you hasten to catch him at home. Knocking at the door, the powdered lacquey makes his appearance. You inquire if your friend Mr. Nemo is within. “Not at home, Sir,” is the answer. “Why, I saw him enter only a minute ago.” Still the same stiff denial, “Not at home, Sir.” How forcibly do those beautiful lines of Lord Byron occur to me as the truest though most severe censure ever passed on boasting mankind:—

" Oh, man ; thou feeble tenant of an hour,
Debased by slavery, or corrupt by power ;
Who knows thee well must quit thee with disgust,
Degraded mass of animated dust !
Thy love is lust, thy friendship all a cheat,
Thy smiles hypocrisy, thy words deceit."

Well, my curious friend having heard a great deal of the celebrated De Ville, wished me (as shy country maidens do when they submit their fair palms to the scrutiny of some itinerant Egyptian prophetess) to have my secret failings exhibited as well as his own. Nothing like having a companion to be experimented upon also. Down the Strand we toddled, therefore, to the den of the mighty necromancer. I must go first, of course, and when he had heard all that could be said of my character, then his cranium should be submitted for scrutiny. It needed little art to tell my failings—that I was a sort of Will Careless—viewing all things *couleur de rose*—sanguine in my expectations—and believing all men to be honest and sincere. I was told, also, that my good nature would lead me into many troubles, out of which I must trust to my own wits to deliver me. De Ville was a true prophet.

Awhile since I was writing of stoats running down their game by scent. This very day a case in point has just come partly under my own observation. Taking a stroll by the side of a large wood, I met with a woodman at work. One of my terriers being attracted to his wallet, which lay on the hedge, began scratching at it. " Oh ! musn't tear my bag, little dog," said the man. " There's something more than bread there, my friend," I replied, " or my dog would not have noticed it." " And

so there is, Sir, that's true enough; there's a rabbit in it." "Well," I said, "how did he get there?" "Why, in rather a curious way. I wur a sitting down under the wood hedge, eating my bit of bread, when I hears a bit of a rustling, and out comes Muster Bunny in a terrable fluster, dash out into the field, and good cause he had to be in a hurry, when who should be close arter him but Mr. Stoat as brisk as a bee—who but he." "Well," I said, "what then?" "Why, Sur, the rabbit takes out straight ahead into the open field, but Mr. Stoat wur too nimble for 'un, and cotched Mr. Bunny afore he could reach t'other end—how hur did go—'twere like a greyhound coursing a hare." "Well," I said, "why did you not run up and kill the stoat as well?" "Wait a bit, Sur," said the man, with a knowing look, "Mr. Stoat don't do I any harm, but I'm a thinking he ain't the worst friend I've got in the world by a good deal—this ain't the first rabbit I have had by 'un, but I wur a little too quick upon 'un t'other day." "How so?" "Why, I seed 'un running down a rabbit as usual, when I runs up and cries halves rather too quick like, for Mr. Stoat bolts off one way, and the rabbit t'other."

This brings me back to the point from which I have been as usual digressing, with my "Will Careless" sort of rambling propensities, which, as Mr. De Ville said, are strongly developed on my unfortunate cranium. Now, then, for Mr. Wiley's moonlight excursions in search of a supper. On one point I am tolerably well convinced—that he does not kill his game by running or hunting it down. Mr. Wiley takes things rather more coolly, and in his proceedings exhibits unmistakeable traits of the artful dodger. Silently and stealthily

emerging from the wood hedge, he sits up, as a man would in his easy chair, and first puts on his considering cap. Before him, scattered over the field, rabbits and hares are feeding, in happy ignorance of their wily foe's propinquity. His plans are soon laid, and, having fixed upon the victim best suited to his taste, he thus proceeds: he creeps slowly forward, with his body crouching to the ground towards his prey. If the rabbit is startled, it raises itself on its hind legs and looks around—the fox is instantly on the ground, lying as still as death. Again the rabbit feeds, again with slow and silent steps, still crouching, his crafty foe approaches. The rabbit starts, and stamps on the ground. The fox instantly raises himself erect—that form and eye once seen, the wretched rabbit quails beneath them, and tries to hide himself by lying close to the earth. It is enough—Mr. Wiley now knows his victim is secure—creeping forward again in a crouching manner, he slowly nears his frightened prey, and when within a few paces, suddenly raising himself, makes his fatal spring.

When a fox runs up wind, he has generally some object in view, either a head of earths, a drain, or some favourite covert, and he will make every effort to gain it. He does not turn down wind from any knowledge that the scent is less, but because the pressure from without is less with the wind than against it. With the wind behind him, he can judge also of the distance between himself and his pursuers. When the pack are far behind, a fox often loiters by the way, jogging leisurely along, and sometimes stopping to listen. This is the case when he has been forced from his own native covert, and has therefore no particular point to make; he will

then endeavour to shake off the hounds by running wide rings, and making back to his favourite haunts again.

In the months of February and March dog foxes travel long distances to meet their ladies fair, and we have then the best runs. At those times, however, I have sometimes found that the old dog foxes were weak, from being so much on foot, and from want, also, of food, having their attention almost wholly engrossed by other matters. Foxes, also, at this particular season of the year, often have severe battles. A woodman once told me that, upon going early in the morning to his work, he found two dog foxes fighting so savagely, that they did not notice his approach, and that he might have killed one or both with his heavy walking stick. I remember, with a hot sun the beginning of March, killing a brace of fine dog foxes in the same day, which came very unexpectedly to hand, and this I attribute to their being nearly fagged out before they were found by the hounds. Nothing tells so much upon a fox as heat, and although a glaring sun and keen wind in the month of March are prejudicial to scent, knowing well the effect produced by heat on the fox, I would always persevere, and trust to the chapter of accidents to carry me through, scent or no scent, until we succeeded at last in overhauling Mr. Reynolds—often in a very unexpected manner.

In a future letter I shall endeavour to relate how foxes were once brought to book by a master of foxhounds without any scent at all, and how they were made to break covert by another without any hounds. Clever, indeed, must we all admit Mr. Wiley to be, when the brains of so many heads have been racked to outwit him, and little is the fair play he meets with.

LETTER XXIII.

OVER heath and moorland there is generally a capital scent, and in such countries the best and stoutest running foxes are found, principally of the old greyhound sort. They have often long distances to go for food, and the fresh mountain breezes add vigour to their frames. The famous run so lately recorded by Lord Drumlanrig proves the distance these fine mountain foxes will run; it also proves my assertion, that a good pack of hounds, in a fair scenting day, will kill, *unassisted*, the best fox that ever wore a brush. I quite agree with Mr. Delmé Ratcliffe, that it is the finest run in the annals of sporting, either of the present or by-gone days. The runs we see and hear of continually as the runs of the season, your five-and-forty minutes, hour-and-a-half, &c., averaging some ten to fifteen miles distance, are but as pigmies compared to this mighty giant. I felt all my ardour revive when reading this unprecedented performance of thirty miles by this gallant pack, with its glorious termination; and in my younger days I would certainly have gone even so far north to have had a peep at them.

We have column after column of winning greyhounds, names, pedigrees, and colours; but the name of a high-bred foxhound—superior in every respect to a greyhound as fox-hunting is to coursing—never makes his appear-

ance in print—and why not? Are not the votaries of the noble science as two to one, in comparison of coursers? I mean no offence, neither do I intend any reflection upon my friends of the leash, or their long dogs. Every man to his taste. Coursing is a very quiet, gentlemanly amusement, and I admire a handsome greyhound as much as any one can. But I could never fancy coursing after fox-hunting. It is like small beer after the finest champagne.

I would suggest to the proprietor of *Bell's Life*, at the beginning of each season, to request the huntsman of every old-established pack to send a short list of their stallion hounds, not more than *half-a-dozen*, with their names, ages, pedigrees, and height. This list would not occupy more space than the column generally assigned to fixtures during the hunting season, and if published at the end of October, before the regular hunting commences, it would be a capital way to commence business in that line. It must also be very acceptable to all masters of foxhounds, as well as the lovers of the sport. I name October because it is at least a good month before the coupling season begins, and it would enable masters of hounds to send to any favourite blood in distant kennels, now that the facilities of travelling are so great. I have myself, in past times, sent my bitches nearly 200 miles, with a man, horse, and light cart, to a favourite kennel. That distance may now be accomplished in about eight hours, and for a tenth part of the expense.

We have seldom an opportunity of knowing what elements distant kennels are composed of. Runs are recorded, it is true, of almost every pack, and there is

generally a monstrous deal of trash mixed up with them also about splendid packs of hounds, when perhaps, half of them are like turnspits. Then we hear of the darlings (not *Grace* Darlings, many of them, I'll warrant), beauties, and every hyperbole that can be made available to laud their favourites to the skies—flying like pigeons, &c. &c. This is all very fine and may be all very true, perhaps; but I should just like to have a look at these paragons, and so would, I dare affirm, many more. Nothing is more easy. We have a grand cattle show in London. There are also little shows of long-eared rabbits, shows of terriers, and shows of spaniels, and why not an annual show of foxhounds at Tattersall's?

The plan I would suggest is this—that each master of foxhounds should send a couple of young unentered hounds, dog and bitch, of his own breeding (say two or three days before the Epsom Meeting), with their feeders; but, first and foremost, as nothing can be done without a dinner, let every master of foxhounds subscribe a couple of sovereigns annually to a fox-hunting club, to meet at the Clarendon, or any other place which may be considered more eligible. A president should be chosen. Probably either the Duke of Beaufort or the Duke of Rutland would not refuse their services, to promote so laudable an object. For a guinea per head an excellent dinner could be provided, with a sufficient allowance of wine. There are now advertised in *Bell's Life* about seventy packs of foxhounds—say that only fifty subscribed. We have, then, £100 to commence with. If all appeared at the dinner, there would be £50 expended. I would, however, admit a few others, if considered expedient, by tickets. We have, then, £50 to expend in

premiums. These I would award somewhat after this fashion—two prize goblets to the best two couples of hounds, the first of £10, the second of £5; a silver medal or two for others. I would also distribute £10 among the feeders. We have then £20 left for extra expenses.

A judge or judges should be appointed, to decide on the merits of the hounds, and their awards to be given after the dinner, and the prizes distributed. The annual subscriptions forwarded to the Editor of *Bell's Life*, who would, I have no doubt, receive them, and lend his able assistance to the secretary to carry out the arrangements about the dinner, prizes, &c. The formation of such a club would be most desirable. By it all disputed points might be settled as to hunting rights, &c., and good and sound rules laid down. Something more than mere custom has been long required, for seldom does a season pass without some little *emeute* among masters of hounds touching claims to coverts, which, were a club once established, might be referred to its decision, and thus all angry feelings be allayed.

The formation of such a club would be a new era in the sporting world. There might also be a fund established for deserving huntsmen, whippers-in, and feeders, when out of place or in reduced circumstances. The sight of twenty couples of the finest young foxhounds in England would be worth travelling a good many miles to witness, and would attract as many visitors nearly as the Zoological Gardens. An admission fee might be taken on one day, which would make up a fund for the feeders. The dinner would render distant masters of hounds better acquainted, and, “amid the feast of reason

and the flow of soul," all would go merry as a marriage bell. Thus much at present on this subject, which I leave for the consideration of masters of hounds.

I will now change the *venue* to changing foxes, which is about as unpleasant a *contretemps* as can occur to an ardent huntsman or an eager pack of hounds. You have been running your fox, found late in the day, perhaps, for an hour with a holding scent, when, on reaching Hazlewood, the scent becomes wonderfully improved, and the hounds are in full cry, ringing merrily round the covert. Now we shall have him—how close they stick to him—it will soon be all up with Mr. Reynolds. Such thoughts as these pass quickly and excitingly through the huntsman's head; when, over the drive, instead of a beaten fox, with his brush dragging on the ground, another light and airy form bounds across at a spring, with all his blushing honours thick upon him. Your heart sickens at the sight of this unexpected vision, at least mine has often upon such an occasion. It is a regular damper. For a second or two I have sat upon my horse as if entranced. You see at once that your hunted fox has gone on, and you are left the pleasant alternative of perhaps fruitlessly attempting to recover a good fox, with a worse scent than you had ten minutes ago, even supposing you can stop the hounds—which is very doubtful—or the agreeable prospect of being beaten by the gay gentleman who is now dancing before your half-tired pack, and appears strong enough to run till midnight. Perhaps, whilst you are deliberating how to proceed, and racking your brains to little purpose, a view halloa from the further end of the covert settles this knotty point for you at once, and you are obliged to

follow your hounds with about as pleasurable sensations as a boy would entertain upon returning to school late in the holidays, when he anticipates either a flogging or an imposition for being last of his class.

I remember upon one occasion, particularly, getting upon the line of a fresh fox late in the day, who led us a proper dance across country, then over some downs, and, just as it became dark, into the stiffest vale of our grass country. Stopping the hounds was out of the question; for some time we could not get near them, and when we did, it was so dark that we could not see them, and their cry was our only guide. The fox appeared, from his mode of running at last, to be quite as much in the dark as ourselves. The last point he had made was for a head of earths, which were closed, and being foiled in this, he tried to foil the hounds by short running in some small enclosures. Jim being mounted on a white horse, took the lead, and I was glad enough to follow him, his horse being fresher than mine. Occasionally, a crashing, groaning sound reached my ears, with a loud "come up" from Jim, as he floundered through a ditch on the other side of a strong bullfincher, with a caution to me in his wake, "Take care, Sir, there's a nasty place the other side." We scrambled on in this manner for about twenty minutes, when the fox took refuge in some out-buildings behind a gentleman's house, close to a large market town. Having obtained a lanthorn from the servant, we found the hounds in the *House of Commons*, underneath which Mr. Reynolds had ensconced himself in anything but a bed of roses. Dislodging him from such a place, without breaking up the floor, being out of the question, we "left him alone in his glory,"

having then just twenty miles to toddle home in the dark.

A good ear is of essential service to a huntsman, without which he cannot be a complete master of his art. When hounds are running their fox in covert, a fine ear will be able to distinguish the distance between them, and detect in a moment any alteration in the scent. If he is on good terms with his fox when he enters the covert, there is not so much likelihood of the hounds changing, but if with a bad scent, and the hounds suddenly begin running hard, he should be then on the alert, as the chances are there is a fresh fox before them. A hunted fox will never allow hounds to get too near to him, as long as he has the power to keep out of their way. The scent of the hunted fox also is very inferior to that of one fresh found, and this will direct an observant huntsman. Upon these occasions it is that the services of a clever whipper-in are of the greatest use. He will get forward to the end of the covert before the hounds enter it, and be careful not to halloo any fox but the hunted one. Should the hounds carry the scent through, he will signal the huntsman, and keep forward with the hounds until his arrival.

Beckford says he would rather have a first-rate whipper-in and a secondary huntsman, than *vice versa*. I quite agree with him in this remark. A whipper-in has quite as many opportunities of showing his talents as a huntsman, and upon him often depends the successful termination of a hard day's work. With him also rests, to a very great extent, the steadiness of the hounds. A clever whipper-in will at once discern the hunted fox from a fresh one; whereas a stupid fellow will halloo

the first fox he views, and bring the hounds into more difficulties than he has the sense to get them out of.

There have been times when I have been almost deceived myself in the *appearance* of the hunted fox, in dry weather particularly; and his last efforts to escape are sometimes astonishing. I remember once, after a severe chase, running a fox into a gentleman's kitchen garden, the wall of which was about ten feet high. Over this he went, apparently as fresh as when he was first found; but he made no further efforts, and lay down among some cabbages until the hounds picked him up. Another ran to the top of a house, and remained on the roof till the hounds made their appearance in the yard below. He then made a spring at the chimney stack, which he succeeded in gaining, and bolted down the flue. The house was three stories high, which he ascended by first jumping on to some buildings adjoining. It was occupied by two maiden ladies, who were sitting in the room, into which Mr. Reynolds made his *entree* down the chimney, covered with soot. The consternation of the ladies may be easier imagined than described. The screams they uttered at the unexpected visit of such an intruder, begrimed with soot as he was, and from such a quarter, scared the fox so much, that, after taking a turn round the room, he bolted again up the flue—the ladies in their terror flying through the door at the same time, and screaming for assistance. In a moment the whole house was in an uproar, and the first flight of riders coming up, soon added to the confusion.

One more zealous than the rest, a hard rider, as well as a very handsome fellow—who went by the name of “Handsome Jack”—gained admittance at the front door,

and with him and two or three others, the hounds also rushed in, and took possession. The ladies fled down to the lower regions, leaving to their domestics, who were all women, the ejection of these unwelcome visitors as they best could. Besoms and brushes were put in requisition, but to little avail; the hounds showed fight, and, having gained possession of the drawing room, held their ground, or rather, their floor. "Handsome Jack," who was quite a ladies' man, having, by his good looks and soft words, gained over the pretty housemaid, was seen looking out with her, all smiles and good humour, at one window; and from another, some of the hounds, as if quite at home, were gazing down on their astonished companions in the yard below. To dislodge Mr. Reynolds from his hiding-place was not, however, quite so easy a matter. The tongs were put in requisition, but at the first nip, the fox ascended higher. They then tried the broom, which brought down lots of soot, so that Handsome Jack and his companions were very soon as black in the face as sweeps; but Mr. Reynolds would not come down. They then sent one of the hounds up the chimney, the whippers-in shutting the others outside the door. This had the desired effect, and in a few minutes down came hound and fox into the room below, with such a cloud of soot that it saved the fair ladies of the mansion the necessity of employing a chimney sweeper for the ensuing three months. "Oh dear, oh dear!" exclaimed the pretty housemaid, "the carpet is entirely ruined! What will my mistress say!" "Oh, never mind, my dear," said Handsome Jack, "this don't happen every day in the week." "No, Sir, once in one's life is quite enough for such a job as this will be."

The fair complainant was remunerated for the trouble likely to ensue after this black affair, and the fox, having been secured, was taken into some meadows opposite, and turned adrift. Sufficient time was given him, and then the hounds laid on the scent, or rather track, for scent there was none at first from his worship, who presented the appearance of a running soot-bag. After he had well shaken himself, however, and brushed through a fence or two, the hounds set to work running hard, and the who-hoop soon resounded over the late tenant of the chimney.

LETTER XXIV.

It is a general remark that woodland foxes afford the best chases. One reason is, that they always have a good start before the hounds; and another, that many of them are strangers there, and have a point in view to run home to. Woodland *bred* foxes are often tiresome brutes, that will hold to the covert, and wear out a pack of hounds, by ringing round and foiling the ground so much that the hounds cannot press them. A capital master of hounds, who formerly hunted some very large woodlands, containing two or three thousand acres each, was once asked by a young and ardent sportsman, why he did not *force* the foxes to fly. "Force them, indeed," exclaimed the indignant master, "force your grandmother to suck eggs!"

Unless large woodlands are hunted nearly once a week throughout the season the foxes bred there will not shift their quarters; but as now-a-days the fashion or fancy is all for galloping and pace, the favourite places, such as small coverts, gorses, and spinies, are often called upon—so often, indeed, that the foxes take refuge in the big woods. To secure a good run, therefore, you must go away, if possible, with the first fox that breaks; he is sure to be a stranger.

A very famous master of foxhounds, quite at the head

of the list, some few years since, was so bothered in a large woodland (where foxes abounded) by their always beating his hounds, that he had recourse to rather an unsportsmanlike method of thinning their numbers, and bringing home a fox's head—we cannot say in triumph. The keeper had received orders to stand in some out of the way ride, where the foxes crossed, and after the hounds had been running their allotted time of two hours or so, and the coast was clear of riders in that direction, to give Mr. Reynolds, *en passant*, a salute in the rear, not for the purpose of helping him on his already too fast career, but to stop it short at once by breaking one of his legs, or otherwise maiming him.

Another master of hounds who was out one day in these woodlands hearing the report of a gun, and observing his old friend toddling off in that direction, smelt a rat, and, proceeding quietly on his track, overheard the following conversation with the keeper:—"Well, William, did you tickle him a bit?" "No, Sir, I missed 'un clean, but better luck next time he comes round." This brother master, being a facetious fellow, used to remark afterwards of his friend's hounds that the *black bitch was the best hound in the pack*.

The gentleman who afterwards succeeded to these same coverts, having got together a new pack of hounds, found the same difficulty at first in making the foxes break covert; but he adopted a different and much more merciful plan. He caused large fires to be lit, and kept burning during the night, to scare them away. One of his field having joined Mr. Slowman's hunt was greeted by my old friend in his usual sarcastic manner when things did not go to his liking:—"So, I find there is a

new plan of making foxes break covert introduced into this part of the world ; they *smoke them out !*"

If I have at any time when writing of my visit to Mr. Slowman's country appeared to bear heavily on my old and reverend friend, nothing was really further from my intention. He was, it is true, bigotted to his own pack of hounds, and for this I applaud him. Every man who has a good pack of hounds in his own country, with a real sportsman at the head, should stick to them through thick and thin, and be cautious of changing them for new faces and new systems, which often disappoint the hopes of the most sanguine lovers of variety. His was a pack of which any man ought to have been justly proud. Peculiarities he had, it is true, and who has not ? but this much I am bound to say of him, that he was the finest preacher, the best rider, and the most staunch friend to fox-hunting that ever lived in any country, and long, long will it be e'er we shall look on his like again.

The system now pursued with these large woodlands is to hunt them generally once a week, and the foxes fly without the assistance of powder or smoke. The continual changes which almost yearly take place in the management of fox-hunting countries are prejudicial both to the hounds and to sport generally. Men of large fortune are often attracted by the *eclat* of the thing to take the direction of a fashionable country, which they as hastily resign when they find the weight of the burden they have imposed upon themselves. But there the mischief does not rest ; other and perhaps real sportsmen, and men of business habits (for the management of a pack of foxhounds is a regular business, and requires men brought up from boyhood to that calling, if I may so

express it, to be efficiently and permanently conducted), are deterred, by the ruinous expenditure of their unsophisticated predecessor, to attempt the reduction of things to their proper level, with the inevitable result of those unfair comparisons which will be drawn between his management and the splendored and lavish expenditure of the late master. It has been truly said, that what is worth doing at all is worth doing well. This is particularly applicable to a fox-hunting establishment, but I should be doing little service to the cause of the noble science were I to withhold my decided disapprobation of the extravagant manner in which many hunting establishments are conducted, and I feel assured that every true sportsman and ardent lover of this our national sport will agree with me in these remarks.

About twenty years ago I made a tour with a friend through the grass countries, and visited all the great establishments of that day. The Duke of Rutland's, Duke of Grafton's, Lords Lonsdale's and Fitzwilliams's, and the Quorn kennels; there was no appearance in any of them of ostentatious display or unnecessary expenditure. The kennels of the Duke of Grafton and Lord Fitzwilliam struck me as absolutely deficient in due accommodation for the fine packs of hounds they contained, the lodging houses being little better than those I have seen occupied by a pack of harriers; but the studs of horses were magnificent, such animals as are rarely seen in the provincial countries. From these kennels, however, and a very few others have sprung the numerous packs of foxhounds which now extend through the length and breadth of the land.

I can well remember that, in the neighbouring county

of Northampton, some few years since, the establishment had been conducted on such a grand scale that no man could be induced to take the country for some months; in fact, one of the best hunting countries in England was really going begging for a master, and it was even so late as the month of November before one could be found bold enough for the undertaking. It is quite impossible to form any correct estimate of the expenses which are incident to different hunting establishments. We all know that so many couples of hounds will require so many tons of oatmeal in the year, and the horses so many quarters of oats and tons of hay. We can compute also wages, taxes, and other necessary expenses, but when we come to the renting of coverts, feeding keepers and earth-stoppers for litters of cubs bred, or foxes found, poultry lost by farmers, &c. &c., we are all at sea. These items alone, in some countries, would suffice to keep another pack of hounds, to hunt two days a week.

Masters of hounds, taking to a country with what they consider a good subscription, are often anything but agreeably surprised, at the end of the season, with a long list of these little items, which at the commencement they thought little of. Were real sportsmen only, and men of business, to undertake the management, these excrescences would be lopped off, or reduced to their proper level; for, in fact, these extra expenses should not be borne at all by a master of hounds; they properly belong to the owners of coverts and the gentlemen of the country, and, if not agreed upon as to their peculiar province, a separate fund at least should be provided to meet such contingencies. I have known two guineas paid for each litter of cubs, and a guinea per fox, for

every one found after the 1st of November, and the earth stopping as well; but this was in a country almost deficient in proprietors as hunting men; in fact, the keepers were masters, and, unless well paid, there would have been no foxes at all. These expenses were borne by the unhappy master, as part and parcel of his hunting establishment.

In my own country we had once a very unfriendly neighbour to foxes; in his coverts we scarcely ever found a specimen of the vulpine genus, the *vestigia nulla retrorsum* being rigidly exemplified. Upon the departure of this game preserver a genuine sportsman succeeded, who knew very well the tricks and lies of gamekeepers. I called upon him with a request that I might still be permitted to draw the coverts, and that he would not allow his keepers to destroy the foxes, which I assured him I was well aware had been the case with his predecessor. His reply was both courteous and to the point:—"You are most welcome to draw my coverts as often as you think proper—once a week if you like, and it is my business, as a true sportsman, *to provide foxes*." On the following day he sent for the keepers; his address to them was laconic enough: "Whenever the foxhounds draw my coverts they will find foxes, or all of you will find fresh places." One of the old fox-killers, venturing to remonstrate at this peremptory mandate, and asking how foxes were to be found if there were none there, was cut short with this rejoinder: "Where they come from is no concern of mine, but here they shall be, or you shall not."

We *never* drew those coverts *afterwards*, even if we went there sometimes once a week, *without finding a fox*.

So much difference is there between *real* and *sham* preservers of foxes. We were not obliged to pay or fee these keepers for foxes found or litters bred; knowing their master's humour, the smallest donation was by them most thankfully received. We had several *sham* preservers of foxes, of whom I was well aware; they were apparently most friendly to our sport, and invited the hounds to meet at their houses, but secret orders were given to their keepers not to have *too many* foxes.

As many may not be aware how these things go on in a fox-hunting country, it may be as well to give some little insight into the practices of keepers. By the end of the hunting season, we knew tolerably well the number of vixen foxes left in the country, and the places they frequented. After the first week in March I never allowed any earths to be *stopped at night*; they were only put to in the morning. Old vixens lay down their cubs often about this time, and if stopped out a whole night and day, the whole litter would perish. The vixen, it is true, seldom leaves her young at this early period, except for a short time only, and for the purpose of procuring food, but I would never run the risk of her being barred out. Dog foxes in the month of March seldom lie at ground, and I have also often found heavy vixens above ground, when the earths had been left open all night. Foxes, like dogs, are attached to their homes, and a vixen will lay up her cubs in the same place for several successive seasons if fairly dealt with.

When the hunting season was over, it was Jim's especial business to pay frequent visits to the earths to see that all was fair. He was a man of few words, and there existed between him and the keepers as much real

good will as the latter entertained for the foxes, although apparently, they were all on the best terms. Jim knew their tricks, and was a match for them; they never knew when or where they might find him. He would visit their coverts at all hours of the day or night. Leaving his horse at some neighbouring farm-house, he used to proceed on foot to the covert of any suspected fox-killer, when he thought the man would be absent, examine the earths to see if any traps had been set, and search the runs as well. Sometimes the keeper would meet with him when so occupied. "Well, Mr. Jim, you seem very fond of paying my woods a visit." "Only look in occasionally to see how the foxes fare; that's my business you know, Mr. Keeper, and master is very particular in having my reports. He knows every litter of cubs in the country, and that ain't so many that he can afford to lose one."

In the very difficult country I had to manage, Jim was to me an invaluable servant; his master's interests and his own were identified, and I did my part also to make him feel perfectly at home in his place. Upon hunting days he always had his dinner in the house, and generally made his appearance in my dining room afterwards, as there were a few little matters to discuss, to which a glass or two of wine was no disagreeable addition. To show the zeal of the man, I will only relate one instance, for the imitation of whippers-in generally. We had run a fox to ground, after a very severe chase of nearly two hours' duration, in an old gravel pit, on the grounds of a gentleman, who was always most friendly to our sport, and who although no fox-hunter himself, had gone so far as to tell me that he would discharge at a moment's

notice any keeper of his who should be found setting traps for foxes. He had also said the same thing to Jim one day, in the presence of his head keeper. This was not forgotten, for Jim never fancied these keepers, and being on the outskirts of our country he could not overlook them quite so often as he thought necessary. One of these keepers was present when we ran the fox to ground and promised "he should be taken care of."

Upon our return home, and when I had just dined, Jim requested an audience; he was always at once admitted. "I have been thinking, Sir," he said, "of what that keeper told you about taking *care* of the fox, and my notion is, that he does mean to *take care* of him, and such care that we shall never find him any more. I don't like those men and never did." "Well, Jim," I said, "I have an idea also that he won't have fair play, but we cannot help it now, such a night as this is." (It was dark as pitch and raining as well; and the place we had run the fox to ground in was at least ten miles from the kennels.) "I don't wish you to turn out in such weather as this, and the fox must take his chance." "Well, Sir," replied Jim, "if you don't mind it, I don't, and that fox is too good to have his brains knocked out by those rascally keepers. I shall go, Sir, and see after him."

Having hastily swallowed a tumbler of wine, and without changing his clothes, Jim mounted a hack, and set off on his dark excursion. Arriving at a farm house near the gravel pit he there left his horse in the care of the farmer, and proceeded on foot and alone to the spot. Having a good thick stick in his hand he groped about at the earth for the traps which he suspected were set there. Snap went one directly—this he put away.

Trying again, his stick was caught by two others. "Just as I thought," exclaimed Jim. "Pretty care they were going to take of our fox; but now I'll play keeper and catch one or two of these vagabonds, or my name ain't Jim." He accordingly hid himself in some bushes in the pit close to the earth, and there lay down until about ten o'clock, when he heard footsteps approaching. Two men came down to look at the earth, nearly touching Jim as they passed. Seeing nothing unusual there one of them exclaimed, "Come away, he is not caught yet." "But you are," said Jim, jumping quickly upon his legs and collaring the keeper. "Let go," cried the man, "or it shall be the worse for you." "Not a bit of it," said Jim; "I can thrash two such fellows as you any day in the week. I am just in the humour for it now, and if I don't serve you out as bad as you meant to serve our old fox, my name is not Jim. So no nonsense—you two shall go before your master this very night, or one of you I'll carry there, that's all."

Jim being a tall powerful fellow, and a pretty good hand at most games, that of fives not excepted, the keepers were obliged to submit, and they all marched off together for the mansion, Jim shouldering the steel traps, which he told me afterwards he longed to give the head keeper a taste of about his head and ears. The master having told him upon more than one occasion that he should never be refused admittance if he was at home, Jim walked up to the front door, with a knock and ring, as if some gentleman had arrived. He knew it would be of no avail going to the back. The footman soon made his appearance, and was not a little surprised when he beheld Jim there. "Is your master at home?" coolly

asked Jim. "No, he ain't," replied the indignant lacquey, "to such visitors as you—your place, if anywhere, is at the back door." "I rather think not, just now, Mr. Footman, and I will thank you to tell your master Mr. So and So's whipper-in wishes to see him on particular business." "I shall do no such thing," said the footman. "Very well," replied Jim, "then here I'll knock and ring, if for the next hour to come, until you do, my fine fellow, that's all."

The man shut the door, thinking Jim dare not do as he threatened, but he little knew the customer he had to deal with. In a moment such a thundering knocking at the door, and such a pull at the bell, that you would have thought the Marquis of Carabas had arrived. The master, who had just gone to his dressing-room for the night, hearing this racket at the hall door, rang his own bell violently. His valet rushed up stairs at the summons. "Who on earth is at the hall door at this time of night?" demanded the master. "I can't tell, Sir." "Then go this minute, and let me know; they will knock the door down." The enraged footman was obliged to open the door again. "Well," said Jim, "are you going to deliver my message, or shall I knock and ring a little longer?" "Confound your impudence," said the footman, "I should like to twist your neck a bit." "Only just try, Mr. Longshanks," rejoined Jim, "and I will soon take some of that powder out of your wig for you."

The message at last being delivered to the master of the mansion, he desired Jim should be shown into his study, where, in a few minutes, he made his appearance. Jim apologized for his apparent rudeness in applying at

the grand entrance for admission, and disturbing him at such an hour. "But," he said, "you told me, Sir, whenever I detected any of your keepers catching foxes, I was to give you immediate information of it, and I knew as the keepers had gone round to the back of the house, there would be little chance of my gaining an admittance in that quarter. I hope I have not offended you, Sir?" "By no means, Jim; your master has often expressed to me the high opinion he has of your conduct generally, and I fully appreciate an honest and trustworthy servant."

Jim's story was soon told. The master desired him to go into the housekeeper's room for refreshment, whilst he wrote me a few lines; but this offer of hospitality was politely declined, as Jim suspected his beer might be hocussed, at the suggestion of the keeper and tall footman. The few lines addressed to myself were to the point, leaving the delinquent keepers at my disposal. Other devices and tricks of these gentlemen in velvet I shall touch on in my next.

LETTER XXV.

IN countries where keepers are paid so much for each litter of cubs found in their district, they will only *tithe* them a little before they are found by the hounds, to receive their fee, but when that is received, the work of destruction commences with those left, and the old vixen is often the only one spared. I have found a good litter of foxes in such places on the first day of hunting, but not a young fox afterwards. My plan was, when at the mercy of a keeper, to allow him so much for every fox found, but nothing for the litter. Some were such determined fox-killers that we could not satisfy them, except at such cost as to create dissatisfaction among all the rest. With them I adopted another plan, which bothered them not a little. I kept on drawing their coverts, fox or no fox, as often as I possibly could.

One man, who had some pretty coverts, which always had held a fox before his appointment as keeper, I was quite satisfied trapped the foxes, although we could never catch him in the act. I paid his coverts a visit pretty often, and one day he remonstrated, saying it was no use the hounds coming, as the foxes never would lie there, and I only drove his pheasants out of bounds, to be shot by poachers, who were waiting for them, when the hounds disturbed the wood. "Well," I said, "keeper,

that is your affair; this was always a favourite place for foxes before you came, and I am satisfied in my own mind that you kill them; nothing that you can say will alter my opinion. Instead, therefore, of drawing your coverts once a month, I will draw them once a fortnight, and at the end of the season (when pheasants ramble so much) once a week, if possible, so that you will lose more pheasants that way than by foxes. Your master tells me you have the strictest orders from him to preserve them, and find them I will, or drive every pheasant out of the covert." "Did master tell you this, Sir?" said the keeper. "Yes," I said, "he has, and many other gentlemen also." "Well, then," he said, "I don't like to be blamed in this manner, and if you will promise to keep it secret, I will let you know something more about the business; but you must first promise me that you will never say a word to any living man whilst I am here, or I shall lose my place." "Your secret," I said, "will be safe with me; and, for your satisfaction, it is not the only one of this kind I am the keeper of." "Well, then, Sir, I have secret orders from my master to kill every fox I can." "Very well," I replied, "we now understand each other, but I suspected this was the case long ago." We almost always found a fox there afterwards, but the keeper had a difficult game to play, as he often told me, to satisfy his master—but being thus let behind the scenes, I helped him out, although his secret was never divulged by me, nor has it been, until now, notwithstanding he has long since been consigned to that place where many of his victims lie buried.

A true sportsman once remarked of the country I hunted, "What with fellows who preserve foxes and

fellows who don't, what a confounded country this is to live in!" A mere master of hounds, without being a man of business also, could not have kept his ground for two consecutive seasons, where I managed to fight on, and with perfect success, for more than a quarter of a century, fully alive to the tricks of keepers and their masters as well. I contrived to meet them one way or another, and the sport we had was so good, that many *vulpecides* were fain to yield to that bugbear public opinion, and preserve foxes in reality. A few genuine sportsmen we had; but, although their will was good, their number was very small. The farmers, however, as a body, throughout the whole country, were trumps—they were, generally, lovers of the sport, good riders, and staunch friends to the hounds. Without them I never would have attempted nor could I have held my ground. To many a secret, touching fox-killers, I gained access through their means, and a mutual good understanding always existed between us.

I called upon as many as I could during *vacation time*, although our country was a wide one, and a hearty welcome always awaited me; Jim, also, was a great favourite with them, and could do what I never could, drink a few glasses of strong beer, without being much the worse for them. Many of our farmers were men of good property, and some possessed fox coverts, in which a litter of foxes was always bred—there was no fear of them being killed by keepers. To the extreme points I generally dispatched Jim, but this would not always answer as well. The daughter of a farmer, who had a small covert close adjoining the farm-yard, whose tenants (the poultry) belonged to herself, sent me word one day that,

unless I paid her a visit *in propria persona*, she would have all the foxes killed. This being *only* twenty-five miles from the kennel, was rather a long ride to make a morning call, which I told Jim to say the next time he went there. "It won't do, Sir," said Jim, "I have told her that same story once or twice before, and it won't do any longer. Go you must now, Sir, or that litter of cubs will go, that's clear, as the young lady is rather a determined sort of character." "Very well, Jim, if I must go, I may as well go at once, so call me at five o'clock to-morrow morning."

I have before remarked, that a master of foxhounds who does his duty, has no sinecure in any country. In some he is a slave to the public, and obliged to submit to all kinds of inconveniences to keep things together. He works like a *horse*, and fares like an *ass*, which by the way, I undoubtedly think he is, all things considered. Although there is a great deal of what is called luck in fox-hunting, yet a master who is thoroughly acquainted with his business, and has a good pack of hounds, may fairly calculate upon showing sport one season with another. The number of foxes killed (of which huntsmen are so fond of boasting) proves nothing as to the merits of the hounds, or the cleverness of the huntsman. Foxes which lie idle, and do not hear the cry of the hounds for perhaps two consecutive months in the year, are as quickly disposed of as cubs in September. A good country even, ill-managed, will fail to afford sport; whilst a bad country, under active and able management, will obtain notoriety. We cannot level hills, or change flints into sandstone; but this I maintain, that a thorough good sportsman will make foxes run and show sport in any country.

Year after year we hear the constantly-repeated cry of—bad season—no sport—too much rain for one, or too little for another country—no scent. Somehow or other, the weather has always to bear the blame, and fortunately the weather has very wide shoulders, and cannot complain. A pretty state of things we should have, could every man choose the day best suited to his own peculiar fancy. As, however, we cannot alter the weather, we must try to meet it in the best way we can. Not having the choice of making the weather for the hounds, the next best thing to do is to make the hounds for the weather; and were this matter a little more carefully attended to, we should not hear quite so many complaints about the weather. Where good sport forms the exception, and not the rule, in any professedly good establishment, the fault lies not in the weather, but in one of these two things—*the hounds* or *the management*. For the last few years the winter season has certainly been in favour of hunting, yet the accounts of good sport are scanty. The fault, I am inclined to think, lies in the present wild steeple-chasing system of trying to ride a fox to death the moment he is found, without giving him a fair start for his life.

It being admitted that woodland foxes afford always the best runs, why not treat all foxes as woodland foxes? Give them a fair start, and let the hounds settle quietly down to the scent, without that extraordinary and unsportsmanlike hurry-scurrying, which is the general practice in these fast days. So long as the present system is pursued, really good sport will never be obtained. It is too much the fashion to cry down gentlemen huntsmen, for what reason I never could understand, unless the

opinion is, that the "noble science" is so very simple that the most ignorant can become perfect masters of it. If that be the case, it is the only science to which a good education, with corresponding talents, is not a recommendation. If a thorough-bred horse can beat a half-bred one, why is it that a gentleman, with a good education, activity, and intelligence, should be considered inferior to a servant?

The specimens we have had of gentlemen huntsmen, though not very numerous, are sufficient to prove the assertion of Mr. Delmé Ratcliffe, who thus writes:—"I will maintain that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred—I might safely say in every case—where not only mental, but an exertion of physical power is required, that *blood will tell*." I might name several in the provinces, but will select two only, from the grand country of the Meltonians—Osbaldeston and Assheton Smith—the latter still continuing up to the present time to show capital sport almost every season, without intermission, in, I was going to say, one of the worst hunting countries in England, and I do not know that I am far from the mark. He has, it is true, a pretty skurry every now and then over the downs, and a few grass fields to cross in the valleys occasionally. These are, however, few and far between, but the *little spinies* he has to draw, such as the West Woods, Southgrove, Collingbourne Woods, Doles, and Fackham, would any one of them be sufficient to scare away his most attached friend from the grazing districts.

It is not indispensable that a gentleman should always feed his hounds, any more than a shooter should feed his pointers, or a courser his greyhounds. Dogs soon dis-

tinguish who is their master, and if he is kind to them, and can kill foxes for them, he need not give himself any concern about their good will to serve him or attachment to his person. Mr. Smith, I believe, seldom feeds his hounds; but any one who could witness his reception among them at the covert side would not be long in doubt as to the feelings they entertain towards their master. Lord Darlington and the great Mr. Meynell generally fed, or saw their hounds have their dinners, before sitting down to their own on hunting days; and, I must confess, I did not think I could do better than follow such good examples. The time occupied in feeding from eighteen to twenty couples of hounds, when their food was ready, which was generally the case before I dismounted from my horse at the kennel door, did not occupy more than from ten to fifteen minutes. After feeding the hounds left at home in kennel, the feeder prepared for the hunting hounds. The meal and meat were mixed together ready in the troughs, and at the first blast of the horn the broth was added hot from the boiling house; so that we were never kept waiting more than two or three minutes at any time. From long practice, and thorough knowledge of the hounds, I could feed twenty couples as easily as I could five at a time.

I tried the experiment once of letting a huntsman have the management of my hounds in the field, but it would not do—half the pleasure was gone; and I came to the conclusion, before the expiration of the first month, that I must either hunt the hounds myself again or give them up entirely. Gentlemen who merely take the management of a pack of foxhounds derive only a secondary pleasure from the sport, and I feel assured, were it a

more general practice for them to hunt their own hounds, we should not hear of the continual changes which are yearly taking place. They would become attached to their hounds, anxious to show sport, and more enthusiastic in the pursuit of it.

In confirmation of this view of the case, I cannot do better than quote a passage from the clever author of the "noble science," who, in alluding to the power of mind, thus expresses his opinion:—"For this reason I imagine that men of education, or, in the common acceptance of the term, gentlemen, who *devote* themselves to any of the several exercises or accomplishments, such as riding or driving, boxing or fencing, shooting, cricket, &c., are generally found far to excel, in proportion to their number, the rest of the world, who in inferior station have adopted any of these walks of life, from necessity rather than choice. In divinity, physic, or law, the highest ornaments have been, with few exceptions, the most finished gentlemen. And I have no doubt that a gentleman farmer, instead of too often furnishing matter for a joke, would prove the best agriculturist if he would farm less as an amateur, and bring his own deductions to the assistance of the general rules of practice. I see myself no other objection to the gentleman huntsman but this, that he would not, could not, consistently with the maintenance of any society, abandon himself to the labour of the field, certainly not of the kennel; and I hold it a *sine qua non*, that a huntsman should be perpetually with his hounds."

I cannot quite agree with Mr. Delmé Ratcliffe, that a gentleman who hunts his own hounds must of necessity give up society even to a moderate extent unless he hunts

six days a week; in that case I should suppose society must suffer considerably; but a thrice or four days a week man may not only give a dinner party occasionally at his own house, without allowing the fish to be spoilt before he makes his appearance in the drawing room, but he may also favour his neighbours with his company, if very desirable, at least three days in the week. Although not a very gay man in my day, I have danced all night at two balls in a week, dined out two, and hunted three days. That I did not feel particularly fresh at the end of it must be admitted; but on account of my hunting propensities, the chair allotted to me at my neighbour's table was not often vacant. That it is not indispensable for a gentleman huntsman *always* to feed his own hounds I think I have brought evidence to prove in the case of Mr. Assheton Smith. I therefore may conclude that Mr. Delmé Ratcliffe, having heard me on this point, will admit my argument to have some little weight. That we both agree in other respects there is no doubt, "that a gentleman huntsman ought to be the best huntsman."

Although I have often stated that the management of a pack of foxhounds is a business of itself, yet I have nowhere said that it should be the *only* business of a man's life. Hunting in moderation is a rational amusement; as such, and such only, can it be considered, when it does not materially interfere with other and more important avocations. When this is the case it becomes at once an irrational amusement; he who devotes six days out of the seven in a week to hunting alone, makes it then the business of his life, or at least the greater part of it, reckoning the hunting season from the beginning of September to the end of April. Men labour six

days out of seven for their daily bread. Tradesmen and merchants devote every day in the week to their calling to secure an independence for themselves in old age. No necessity, however, exists for any man to hunt six days in the week (unless the huntsman who is paid for so doing); but on the contrary, there is a necessity that he should not do so.

An old gentleman who had been listening very quietly to some young and ardent sportsmen, who were talking of their hunting five and six days a week, very coolly observed, "Well, gentlemen, then it strikes me that you consider the whole business of life to consist in trying to get foxes out of it!" There should be moderation in all things—" *Sunt certi denique fines quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum.*"

Having settled the point that gentlemen would make the best performances in the field, I think we may also assume that next in order come those who have served their apprenticeship to gentlemen huntsmen as whippers-in. I could mention several, but there are two men now at the head of establishments, whom I well remember—Jim Hills, who whipped-in to the Hon. H. Moreton, now Lord Ducie, and Jim Treadwell, who lived for many years with the late Mr. Codrington. A better judge of hounds and hunting never existed than Lord Ducie; and Mr. Codrington was admitted by all his brother masters of hounds to have been a perfect oracle on the pedigrees of hounds, and everything relating to the noble science. That such masters should have turned out first-rate hands cannot be surprising—admitting, of course, that their pupils had natural talents, which only required to be rightly directed. Jim Hills is by all accounts quite

at the top of his profession, and, if we are to judge by the runs chronicled in *Bell's Life* from the Heythrop country, has shown extraordinary sport. From private information, however, I learn that he is one of the quickest and best huntsmen of the present day, and will never give up a fox as long as his hounds can hold on the line. This persevering through difficulties not only proves a good huntsman, but makes also a good pack of hounds. Treadwell has now for several seasons given great satisfaction in Mr. Farquharson's country. He was for some time Mr. Codrington's right hand, and I always thought him calculated in every respect to make a first-rate huntsman. His brother Charles also, who was entered by Mr. Wyndham, and lived many years in Mr. Horlock's service, is now at the head of an establishment at Bramham Moor, and it is not for want of natural talent and good instruction if he does not afford that sport as a huntsman which he so largely contributed to when a whipper-in. In that capacity he might have been equalled, but was never surpassed by any. So much for gentlemen huntsmen and their *protegees*.

LETTER XXVI.

THE question has been proposed to me, how to prevent foxes being caught by pheasant preservers, and the querist has stated, that a friend of his had some traps made with light springs, so as merely to hold, and not maim, a fox ; and that those foxes which had been once caught, were proof against steel traps ever afterwards. This plan I have tried, and it is by no means a bad one, but in these enlightened days, where one fox is destroyed by traps, ten are killed by poison. Old foxes are very shy of approaching a dead bait ; but if the rabbit or pheasant they have killed, and half buried, be found, and a trap placed on the spot, the fox will most probably be caught. There are, also, many other ways of catching foxes in traps, which I will not mention, for fear some gentlemen in velvet may, perchance, peruse these pages, and take a leaf out of my book. Where there is a will, there is generally a way to do things.

If a pheasant-preserver and fox-killer (they are often I regret to say synonymous terms) be situated in the heart of a fox-hunting country, and his coverts do not afford foxes, the best plan I know of is to keep drawing them till they do. Never mind a few blank days ; draw, draw, draw, till foxes are found. If this does not make him preserve foxes, nothing will, except all his neighbours

going in a body, and having a day's shooting in his preserves. As long as it is the fashion to let keepers have rabbits as perquisites, foxes will be destroyed. "Two of a trade can never agree," and upon the head of the devoted fox are placed all the young pheasants which die of the pip, as well as the old ones which find their way into Mr. Keeper's pocket, to exhibit their beautiful plumage in the shop of some licensed dealer in game. All these are put down to Mr. Reynolds's account, and the ignorant master, believing all, of course, his keeper tells him, is thus simple enough to lay all the blame upon an almost innocent victim.

In every country there are many fox-killers, some known, others only suspected. A determined master of hounds will, by some plan or other, make them ashamed of it, if he sets to work in real earnest, supposing, of course, that he is supported by the gentlemen of the country generally. Every man has his weak point somewhere; a careful observer will soon find it out, and there he will work him until he is brought round. I never listened to old women's stories or excuses. Where I knew foxes ought to be found, there I always said openly they were killed by the keepers. A gentleman in our country was annoyed by a remark once made to this purport, and said that he thought it hard to be set down as a fox-killer, when he had given strict orders to his keeper to preserve them. "That," I said, "is nothing to the purpose; your keeper disobeys your orders; therefore you should discharge him." "Prove it," he replied, "and I will do so." "That," I said, "is not so easy an affair, although I shall catch him out before long; but I will settle it another way, if you like. I

will provide a keeper, who shall give you nearly twice as much game as you have at present, and foxes as well." In one or two cases I did provide keepers, who proved my assertion to be correct.

The extraordinary dislike manifested by some game-preservers against foxes, proves one of two things—either excessive ignorance, or the most narrow-minded selfishness. I am not a master of foxhounds now, neither are my coverts drawn by hounds, yet I do not allow foxes to be killed by the keeper, well knowing the very little mischief they do to game. In one covert I have several foxes and as much game as I require; nor have I found, in the last two seasons, either a single hare or pheasant killed by them. There are plenty of rabbits, it is true, to which they are most welcome; and the old vixen does me great service in digging out the stops of young rabbits, in the spring of the year. My keeper admits that one stoat does more mischief in one month than a fox will in three or four, among rabbits, which, of course, like all other keepers, he considers rather in the light of his own property. The *woodman's pet* continues his coursing, and last week ran down four rabbits in one day, three of which were taken from him.

I think I have now written quite enough to prove that the fox is, of all vermin, the least destructive of game; and I trust game-preservers will not listen to every idle tale brought them by their keepers, and wantonly destroy an animal which affords so much diversion to their sporting brethren in scarlet, without interfering with their own.

It is scarcely necessary to make allusion to bag foxes, which I believe are seldom, if ever, in these days, turned

down before a regular pack of foxhounds, such practices being confined to scratch packs of curs, the proprietors of which think it a good thing to wind up the hunting season with some long-winded misrepresentation in *Bell's Life*, with having found a wild fox at Noman's Land, and run him at least forty miles without a check in about fifty minutes. The scent of a bag fox is so very different to that of a wild one, that a *good* pack of foxhounds will not own it. Although this may appear strange, it is, nevertheless, true.

I had once an opportunity of testing it. We had run a fox to ground in a drain, which was dug out, after the hounds had left the place, by some labourers, and carried to one of our hunt, who, of course forwarded him to me, at the same time requesting that he might have the pleasure of a gallop after him. The fox was put away into a large building, and, when meeting with the gentleman the next day out hunting, I expressed to him my doubts that the hounds would run this fox, if let loose before them, and that I did not approve of such practices. He said, for once it could do no harm, and he should like, of all things, to see if hounds could discern the difference between two scents, which he very much questioned. Then, I said, you shall have an opportunity of judging yourself. Accordingly, at our next fixture, this fox, which had only been caught three days, was taken to a covert which we generally drew first, and there turned loose about half an hour before we began drawing, my friend and self being the only persons privy to the transaction.

The wood into which the fox was turned was a small one, so that a fox could not break unseen from any part

of it. I went into the covert with the hounds, which was my general practice, and began drawing. The wood was quickly traversed, and every corner tried—one tongue only was heard of a young hound, who was rather a notorious offender, but not another hound would join him. There was the fox—he was literally among the pack, where I saw him myself—but hunt him they would not; the old hounds came away disgusted. The fox remained for a short time longer, when he broke across a canal, close to the wood, and being headed in that direction, returned again to the covert, a corner of which he threaded, and then broke over the open. The screams and halloos then brought the hounds to the spot, and some of the young ones went off with the scent, but the old hounds would not even then own it—they followed after, but they would not take part in the business. What with the screaming and hallooing, the young hounds went on, and it being a grass vale, soon ran into the fox and killed him, but then they would not eat him; and one of the old hounds, to show his contempt of the whole affair, turned up his leg against Jim, as if to say, “Take that for your pains.”

I was obliged to make excuses about the fox being mangy, and therefore the hounds did not like him. My friend exchanged significant glances with me. We had deceived the field, but we could not deceive the hounds. But for the fact of the fox having washed himself twice in the canal, I do not think even the young hounds, notwithstanding the encouragement they received, would have run this fox a hundred yards; so little do gentlemen who hunt to ride know of the real business going on in the field. As long as hounds go the pace, they give

themselves little trouble what they are running after. That a good sportsman may be of service sometimes to hounds is very true, but it is the best plan to admit of no interference at all by amateurs, and a pack of hounds must be wretched indeed to stand in need of such assistance. Real lovers of the sport may do good in many ways, such as keeping the ground clear of stragglers, where the fox is likely to break, preventing too much noise, giving the hounds time to settle to the scent before the host come clattering on their heels, &c. ; but the less they say to the hounds the better.

Half the checks which occur in a season are caused by men riding too close upon the hounds, and driving them over the scent ; and most annoying it is to a master to see often the whole field bent upon destroying that which he is anxiously endeavouring to afford them—a good run. What any amateur has to do riding alongside of the leading couples, I am at a loss to comprehend, where even the huntsman has no occasion to be, unless he is troubled with short sight. I maintain that no man should ride in such near proximity to the hounds, and where he cannot help doing mischief. To the left or right hand of the pack, as the wind may be, is the huntsman's place, but not so near to the leading hounds as to prevent or interfere with their swinging either to the right or left, when the scent fails at head. They should have always room for this. The eye of the huntsman ought always to be intently fixed upon the leading hounds, and he must be a stupid fellow if he cannot detect in a moment when they have no scent before them. By riding at their head he encourages others to follow his example ; and if the hounds throw up suddenly, they

have then to make their cast among the horses. Hard riders, who have already gained notoriety by their feats in horsemanship, may by their forbearance in not riding too close upon the hounds, set a good example to others ; and to the young aspirants after fame I would offer a few suggestions, by following which they may avoid doing harm if they cannot do good, and may secure to themselves the reputation of being not only good riders, in the true acceptance of the term, but also the character of good sportsmen.

Supposing you ride your own hunter to the place of meeting ; when arrived there you will dismount, put the saddle in its right place, take care the girths are not too tightly drawn, or the throat-lash inconveniently pressing. Should the morning be fine you may as well stand or walk your horse about for a few minutes, and, if a cigar fancier, then is your time for indulging in your favourite weed, although I think there is nothing less becoming to a real sportsman than a cigar. If you wish to have a look at the hounds—and this, of course, you will do if one of the right sort—do not approach too near them unless your horse is perfectly quiet with hounds, and accustomed to them. It is better to give your horse to some one to hold the while you inspect the pack on foot, and not run the risk of drawing down the anathemas of master, huntsmen, and whips, for his kicking and perhaps maiming a favourite hound. Your approaching them on foot will make a favourable impression that you are careful to avoid doing mischief, and understand more of the business than perhaps you actually do. Unless a good judge of make and shape do not hazard an opinion of any particular hound, or you may happen to make a

bad shot, and get laughed at for your remarks. You may ask the name of any one which particularly takes your fancy, and keep your eye upon him afterwards in the work of the day. This will give you an interest in what is going on. You may also ask the huntsman what he thinks of the weather, if of a conversable turn, and, having made your survey, the next best thing you can do is to make yourself scarce, remount your horse, and prepare for business.

If the hounds approach where you are, turn your horse's head in the direction they are going, and, if in a lane or road, keep as near to the fence as possible, giving them room to pass you. Bear in mind throughout the day always to *turn* as the hounds are going, and never *meet them* if possible to avoid it. In going to the covert which is first to be drawn, you will have plenty of time to exchange greetings with your friends, if you have any, and get rid of all the jokes which you may have been bottling up for the occasion.

As soon as the hounds are thrown into covert, then all coffeehousing should cease, and prepare for business. Follow the huntsman at a respectful distance, and observe how the hounds draw. When the fox is found, do not be too much in a hurry, the huntsman will be your best guide to follow, but you must consider him a very great man, and not press too near upon him and his favourites, or he will wish you at the bottom of the sea. If there be real sporting blood in your veins you will not regard a few scratches in the face, or having your boots nearly torn off your legs in brushing through some good stiff underwood.

When the hounds break away, keep your eye upon

your guide, and although your horse may be pulling your arms off, do not let him carry you before the hounds, or you will hear rather more remarks about such a performance than may be quite agreeable. If you cannot hold your horse, turn him off at right angles to the right or left, and get out of the fray as quickly as possible, before the death of some favourite hound is laid to your charge. When you come to the fencing department, do not follow any leader, or you may perchance, should he meet with a pip, pounce upon him on the other side, and occasion him a compound fracture, which would be rather a disagreeable reflection, and destroy your gusto for the sport of that day, if not for the next two months to come. Before coming to your fence, look out the place most agreeable to your fancy, not the *lowest place*, where the fence has been before made up, or the chances are that you may alight in a *squire trap*, the other side; neither select the stiffest or highest part to show any fire-eating disposition. Having only so much ammunition to expend in the day, that is, only one horse with four legs instead of eight, and one pair of bellows to work through with, do not fire away too fast at starting.

Some men ride best with long stirrups, some with short. The best plan is to ride as most convenient and easy to yourself, without regard to what other people do. Sit firm in your saddle, without placing too much dependance on your stirrups; hold your rein tight and rather short over the pommel of the saddle; but fancy you have a silk thread instead of a leather rein in your hand, and as long as you can feel your horse's mouth it is enough. Go quietly at your fence, giving your horse room to collect himself before taking off; sit rather back,

clip him tight with legs and knees, and over you go. Mind your own business, and do not be looking back to see how Jack Rasper or Tom Rattler got over or through, that's their affair; keep your eye upon the hounds; do not ride in upon their line, as if you are going to ride their tails off, but keep rather wide of them, giving them room to turn. When their cry ceases, pull up at once, and whichever way they incline, turn your horse in the same direction, and let them pass you. Your own pace must be always regulated by that of the hounds, and do not be in a fright, as some men are, that they will run away from you. That will not often occur, if you are well mounted, and keep your eyes open, as well as your wits about you.

When the hounds are at fault, keep silence, and do not be boasting with Jack and Tom how splendidly your horse has carried you—keep all this for your ride home, or until you meet at dinner. Should you meet with stone walls, never ride at the lowest place, as the chances are all in favour of your landing in a stone quarry on the other side. Gates require more exertion on the part of your horse than common fences, and a fall over them is often a serious one. At brooks you must go pretty fast, to clear them cleverly. A military seat on horseback is no doubt the most elegant, but I do not by any means think it the most secure. Those who ride by balance chiefly will find it quite as much as they can do to keep their seat, should their horse suddenly swerve at a rasper, in which case they will most probably find themselves on their backs.

I remember seeing a military man, who rode by balance alone, have three tremendous falls at one fence.

The hounds were not running, and he put his horse at a stiff fence, to show off his horsemanship I concluded, as there was no occasion to take the fence at all. Just before taking off, the horse suddenly swerved, and our military hero was on his back in a trice. Up and at it again; show off No. 2—this put him in a passion; he got up again, crammed in the spurs, and went at it furiously—a third time he lay on his back, grinning savagely; but he had pluck, and put his horse again at the fence, which he at last cleared. Had the hounds been running, the probability is that his horse would not have refused at all, and this should be a lesson to all never to be *larking* their horses, when there is no occasion. The duty of a *good rider* is to *spare* his horse, and when the hounds are not running never to ride over a fence, unless it is unavoidable.

A friend of mine, who wanted a little cobbler's wax sadly in his saddle, was riding fast at a fence, which he had made up his mind to clear, and so he did, but without his horse, and much to his amazement found himself at the bottom of a pond, sticking in the mud; luckily his hat only was left there. There being no time to fish it up, he was obliged to finish the run (his horse being fortunately caught for him) with his handkerchief tied round his head, and a pretty figure he presented at the finish. It being cold work riding without a hat he bought one of a countryman for three shillings, and thus being re-established amid the jokes and laughter of his friends trotted off home. Upon this occasion the horse had kept his eyes, where his master's ought to have been, *forward*, and not relishing the idea of a cold bath, although his master seemed evidently so intentioned—did the wisest

thing he could have done: stopped short, and gave his master an opportunity of having a dip first to see how he liked it.

The balance seat is all very well in its way, but in my humble opinion a very insecure one. A good rider has no business to part company with his horse, unless they are both down together; he should, in fact, be a very Centaur, so firmly fixed to his horse that they should have the appearance of being inseparables through kickings, plungings, swervings, and such like performances.

LETTER XXVII.

THE art of riding well to hounds is not to be acquired in one season by every one. It is with most the result of long experience and observation. Many hard riders will keep with the hounds as long as they are in view, but should they give them the slip, they would be puzzled how to catch them again. Knowledge of country and the usual run of foxes is of great service in such an emergency, but without these, keeping to windward and a good ear and eye must be your chief dependance. There is great tact also required in making the most of your horse, and keeping him well together, without distressing him in a long run. A good rider will always keep his horse within bounds, holding him well together over hollow or heavy ground, and assisting him in clearing his fences, whilst Mr. Haremscarum will be going at the top of his speed, with a loose rein, dashing and crashing over or through everything that comes in his way, and perhaps wind up his horse at the end of the first three or four miles by putting him when blown at some yawner which more judicious men get over without difficulty.

The ambition to have and keep a good place with hounds is very laudable, and constitutes the very spirit of fox-hunting; but the excessive jealousy shown by some men, and even want of temper, when others try to

keep as good places as themselves, proves a want of fair rivalry. Riding against another, merely for the lead, is a childish piece of folly. I have ridden with many hard and good riders in my time, but never against them, and, if they got falls, I would stop to help them up again, and they would do the same by me.

I had once the misfortune, however, to displease a first-rate performer, by getting a good start with the hounds, which he did not. He came rattling after us, at a tremendous rate, to recover his place, which he considered it, as first man, and as we had been going very fast for about three miles, over a stiffly enclosed country, his horse was blown in making up leeway, and the first thing I saw of my furious friend was, upon hearing a crash behind me, to behold him on his back in the field, with his horse's hind legs in the ditch. I turned round, and asked him if he was hurt? "Hurt!" he said, "I am not often hurt." That was true enough, for no man had more falls without being hurt than himself. He was soon in the saddle, having held the rein in his hand, which most men who ride for a fall do. A brook being just then before us, he went down at it, a hundred miles an hour pace, with a sneering cheer to me—"Now come along, we are even again." I merely laughed at his bad humour, and was soon over alongside of him. He then rode up hill as hard as he could go, at some stiff posts and rails. Crash went the top bar, and over rolled horse and rider together. I thanked him for letting me through so easily. He angrily replied that he was not yet beaten, and, mounting again, charged a five-barred gate leading into a turnpike-road. This was a settler. His horse fell over, and threw his rider with great

violence nearly across the road; and this time he was really hurt, and obliged to confess it. Having waited until it was ascertained that no bones were broken, although he was most seriously bruised, I prevailed upon him to go quietly home.

We hear of men riding for a fall, and it may be one way of getting to the other side of a fence; but I must plead my ignorance in not being able, either to see the fun of the thing, or the necessity for it. The multiplicity of falls in a season may be proof of hard riding and indomitable courage, but it argues nothing for good horsemanship. He who can ride quietly and well to hounds without them has the greatest claim to the character of a really good performer over country. Accidents will happen in the best regulated families, and every man must expect to embrace mother earth occasionally; but riding a horse, when blown, at an impracticable fence, is, in my humble opinion, a great piece of folly. I have ridden as hard as any man in my youthful days, and, when riding only about ten stone, used to prefer taking gates to any other fence.

In our vale country banks with double ditches prevailed, and I think the heavy weights across this country could hold their way quite as well as the light ones, if not better. A good workman, of 13 or 14 stone, on a powerful horse, will get over or through stiff bounds or hedges, where a light weight would be nearly torn out of his saddle; and in charging an upright quickset of seven or eight years' growth, it requires power and strength to get through that which it is impossible to jump over, the sticks only bending to let one through and then closing after.

The best man in our hunt was a sporting baronet, who had been in the Light Dragoons, but on taking to fox-hunting he had abandoned his military seat, and rode rather short in his stirrups. He was well mounted, knew his business, and rode well to hounds, but I never knew him pretend to interfere with them. No fence ever stopped him, and the falls he got were few. I have known him ride over the lock of a canal, where his horse had to take off on bricks, and land on bricks on the other side. He did it cleverly, but no one followed his example. Upon the hounds crossing a deep and rapid river one day, we rode down together to the bank, where I expected to find a ford; the river was so swollen to the brink that fording was out of the question. "This won't do," I exclaimed; "we must ride higher up for the bridge." "You may do as you like," he said, "but I shall go at it." Seeing a countryman watching us, he hallooed to him to know what sort of bottom there was. "Very good," was the reply. "Well then," he said, "here goes. I shall jump as much of it as I can." So, putting his horse round, he went at it in a canter, and horse and rider disappeared in the middle of the stream. Knowing he could not swim, I watched with anxiety his re-appearance above water. He soon emerged all right in his saddle, and guiding his horse's head by his whip into a small stream which emptied itself into the river, to my great relief, soon stood once more on terra firma. "Good bye, old fellow," he cried, "I will keep with them till you come up, but don't be long about it." Unluckily the hounds took a different turn to what I expected, and when I reached the bridge they were nowhere to be seen or heard.

For more than an hour I rode hard to catch them, when their welcome cry once more greeted my ears. I listened—they were running towards me, and in a few minutes the fox crossed over a green lane where I had pulled up. The scream I uttered was echoed by a faint hurrah to my right, from the sporting baronet, who was coming along at the tail of the hounds by himself. I waited until he jumped the last fence into the lane. “By Jove!” he said, “I was right glad to hear that scream of yours once more, for I have had it all to myself ever since we parted at the river, and *quantum suff.* by this time.” “Where in the world have you been to?” I asked. “That is more than I can tell you; but we have had at least ten or twelve miles of as stiff work as I ever cut out, and now you must ride in and win the brush for me.” This was easier said than done, my horse being nearly as much beaten as his own. We scrambled on, therefore, together for a few more fields, when, seeing the hounds were running into their fox, I jumped off, gave him my horse to hold, and ran in on foot. I brought him back the brush, his well earned trophy. “That brush,” he said, “I shall keep as long as I live, for I have been both huntsman and whipper-in to-day, which perhaps I shall never be again.” Out of the whole field not another man made his appearance that day at the finish. The river threw them out at first, and afterwards they lost the hounds entirely. The day was a very cold one, with a drifting sleet, which froze upon our coats, and my friend’s teeth beginning to chatter, I begged him to ride home at once, and take a stiff glass of brandy and water at the first public-house he came to, and give his horse another if he would drink it. “That won’t

do," he said, "but he will drink beer like a fish, and that he shall have in some warm water."

In my younger days I cared little about a cold water bath; but when arrived at years of discretion, I kept on terra firma as much as possible, leaving to hotter heads to cool themselves in rivers. Brook jumping is all very well, but a souse into a deep and wide stream is not now much to my fancy. Independent of the consequences—an attack of rheumatism or gout, it spoils the pleasure of the whole day afterwards.

There is, I think, too little attention paid in the present day to the training of horses for hunting. Irish horses are considered the best jumpers, and will take standing leaps, which our English horses would be puzzled to accomplish. They seldom make mistakes at their fences, if pulled up and allowed to take them in their own style. A friend of mine sent me over an Irish horse, which would take most extraordinary standing leaps over gates and walls, and, if going ever so fast, he would always check himself, and take these leaps after his own fashion. Not thinking him up to my weight, he was handed over to the second whipper-in, and treated Jack at first acquaintance to a rattling fall or two. He rode him, as he had done his other horses, pretty fast at a stiff gate, which came in his way the first day. Some of the field, not fancying it, persuaded Jack to try first, calculating upon his knocking it open, or breaking the top bar. The horse, before taking off, stopped quite short, and jerked him out of the saddle over to the other side. Then, raising himself on his hind legs, vaulted over upon Jack, who was lying upon his back. Not being damaged, Jack picked himself up, and grinning at

his friends, who were on the wrong side laughing at his fall, said, "Never mind, gentlemen, 'tis a rum way of doing things that horse has, but no matter, we are both on the right side, and that's were you won't be just yet." Jack and the Irishman soon understood each other better, and were for many seasons nearly inseparable companions; but he would never take his fences except in his own peculiar manner.

The Irish train their horses by leading them with a long rein over their high banks and walls, a man following behind with a driving whip. A few practical lessons of this kind teach a horse how to use his legs, and after two or three rolls he becomes *au fait* at his business. He is then backed and ridden across country. The use of a leaping bar is now become almost obsolete in this country, but I always considered it a necessary appendage in a hunting establishment, where a breeding stud is kept up, to supply a succession of horses for the field. A horse which will not submit to be led as well as ridden over fences cannot be considered a perfect hunter. Although the practice of leading over fences should never be resorted to as long as a chance remains of getting over them in the saddle, yet occasions will arise where leading over is not merely the quickest but only way of obtaining a footing on the other side. Fox chases lead one into very queer places sometimes. Outhouses and gardens about villages are often resorted to by foxes as a last refuge, and I am quite satisfied I never could have been with my hounds through such places unless my horse had been properly trained to follow as well as carry his master.

I remember once coming to a plank bridge only, over

a canal. On the taking-off side there was a stile, and on the other side a cradle for foot people only to get over. You could not jump the canal, as there was a row of cottages just opposite. No time was to be lost, as the hounds were over the water, and running hard away from us. The horse I was riding had been bred and trained by myself, and would follow me like a dog, always being directed by the voice what to do. Immediately dismounting, I got over the stile on to the boards; my horse followed, and we arrived safely on the towing-path the other side. Not another would follow. The rattling on boards terrified the other horses, and they would not attempt it. Some then pushed their horses into the water, and guided them over by the side of the foot bridge; others went off to another place. By this manœuvre I was alone with the hounds, deciding at once what to do, and the rest of the field could never make up the lost ground.

In villages there are often narrow lanes with stiles at each end, sometimes doorways. Through such places I have led my horse, I was going to say hundreds of times; very many times I certainly have, and I am quite satisfied I never could have been with my hounds had not my horse been as good a follower through cramped places as a perfect fencer across country. A drop leap into a hard road is another place where you ought to dismount at once, running your whip through the rein, and giving your horse the chance of taking it as he likes. You may be pulled down yourself, but this is far better than foundering your horse or breaking his knees. Upon meeting with a steep hill, at the end of a hard run, climbing it on foot relieves your horse and gives him second

wind; a man, for such a feat, should be in good trim, and I consider, to ride well, he should be in as good trained condition as his horse. Whilst others have been spurring and driving their horses scarcely out of a walk, I have been beating them on foot, by winding the hill, and at the top being all right again, I generally left them far in the rear.

Breaking or losing a stirrup, when hounds are running, is a good opportunity of testing the efficacy of a balance seat, and here I think the balancer will be put to his shifts to keep in his saddle. To ride without stirrups six or seven miles, over a stiff country, is not quite so easy an affair as some men may think. Just for a frolic, let them try the experiment. I should like to witness a steeple-chase of this sort, although I never did, and never will countenance steeple-chases generally. In this case I think the horses would have the best of it. Few would be able to accomplish the feat performed once by Mr. Osbaldeston, of riding without a saddle on his horse's bare back to the end of a run.

Having stated my dislike to steeple-chases, I may add my reasons for it; and first, I may ask, for what other purpose is a steeple-chase horse fitted? Certainly it spoils his temper for a hunter, and renders him restless and fidgety in company. The steeple-chase horse is an animal, *sui generis*, which the restless, ever-betting, miscalled sportsmen of the present day have called into existence to pander to their insatiable taste for book speculation, whilst legitimate racing is in abeyance. Racing can be defended only upon one ground, that it tends to keep up, and, in fact, does keep up in this country, a breed of horses superior to every other in the

wide world, for both size, symmetry, speed, and lasting qualities. Upon this ground racing may be defended, and ought to be supported; but steeple-chasing answers no such purpose, and I think decidedly it should come under Mr. Martin's Act, and be punished as all wanton cruelty to animals deserves to be.

Next in order to steeple-chasing, and twin sister to it, stands calf-hunting, or as it is pompously designated at the head of hunting appointments, "Stag-Hunting." Now, stag-hunting formerly was a noble sport, and patronised by royalty. It bears as much affinity to the calf-hunting of the present time as hunting wild foxes does to turning down bagmen. To rouse a wild deer from his lair of heather on the mountain top, view him as he stands erect, his wide-spread antlers flashing in the morning sun, as if defying the approach of man, is rather a different affair to seeing a poor wretched animal, shorn of his chief beauty, bundled out at the tail of a cart, and oftentimes whipped to make him run. I cannot call this by any other name than calf-hunting. Stag-hunting, in the true acceptance of the term, it is not. It does very well for the cockney sportsman of the vast metropolis.

The flourishing tradesman takes down his wife and children on Easter Monday to treat them to a holiday on the occasion of the grand turn-out, himself mounted on a borrowed hackney for the day. The carriage containing his precious ones is drawn up to have a good view of the scene, whilst papa is nervously preparing himself for the coming fray. "La, pa," cries out Master Thomas, "where is the stag?" "There he is, my dear, in that cart." "I can't see any thing of him, pa."

"Wait a bit, he will soon come out." After waiting half an hour or more in fidgety expectation, Master Tommy is gratified by seeing an animal emerge, which anything but meets his notions of what a stag should be. "Law, pa, is that a stag?" "Yes, my dear; what did you think it was!" "Only look, it has got no horns—it looks more like a donkey, pa; the stags in my picture book have all got fine horns, and look so grand. Oh, pa, it must be a donkey after all." "Hold your tongue, Tom, and don't talk so loud, or her Majesty's huntsman will hear you."—Exit pa.

Tommy ain't satisfied, so he attacks mamma next. "Why do they cut the stag's horns off, ma—it makes him look so foolish?" "Why, my dear, if his horns were not cut off he might run them into your papa's leg or stomach, and that would be a very serious thing, you know, Tommy." "Well, ma, I shouldn't like riding after such a poor thing as that."

I was present at the grand meeting in the New Forest, some few years ago, when the royal pack went down for a week's wild deer hunting. The first meet I shall not easily forget. It appeared to be a gathering together of all nations and languages. Such a motley group of equestrians I never before set eyes on. Soldiers, sailors, tinkers, and tailors; every animal, from a donkey to a dray horse, being put in requisition. The numbers were computed at from one to two thousand. Davis, the huntsman, on recognising a brother of the craft in the crowd, lifted up his hands as if in supplication to rid him from the mob. As the hounds moved off at a pretty brisk trot through the trees, the motley assemblage began to disperse, and even at this early period

casualties occurred. A sailor on a cart horse rode foul of his brother tar on a forest pony. "Avast there, Jack," cried the latter. "Shiver my timbers, but that big craft of yours will run down my life boat in this gale." "Steer ahead, Tom, for this crazy old brig won't tack, and she is full three sheets in the wind already; so look out for squalls."

The hustling and bustling, and jostling against each other, and the cracks that were met with against the limbs of the trees formed a very amusing overture until the play began, which it very soon did, by a deer being found; and away we went right over the open and across a morass, which was only passable at certain places. The scene that ensued baffles description; in every direction were seen horses galloping away without their riders, numbers floundering in the bog, some scrambling through to the other side, and several nearly buried. Following my leader and host, who being then master of the New Forest hounds, and acquainted with all the safe passes, we soon left the majority of our large field in the rear, to settle their differences as best they might. The hounds now divided. Davis went with one lot; my friend, with one whipper-in, myself, and about thirty others kept with the other half of the pack. After running fifty minutes at a good pace, our deer, a four year old, lay down in some high gorse bushes on the top of a hill.

The hounds were stopped, as it was intended to take the deer alive. "Now, gentlemen," said the whipper-in, "if you will only draw up round, I will creep under the gorse and hobble him." "Leave that to me," I said; "you attend to your work." I drew all the horsemen

round in a circle, with their horses' heads to the gorse. This was readily done. "Now, gentlemen," I said, "don't be nervous, but stand firm together; the deer is only a young one, and will not hurt you; he is moreover, so blown, that he cannot jump over your heads." All promised compliance, whilst I went to help the whipper-in. Tickling a trout is one thing, but tickling a wild deer is rather another guess sort of an affair. Our lord of the forest did not fancy this sort of thing at all—his motto evidently being *noli me tangere*. At the first touch of the whipper's-in hand he bolted upright out of the gorse, and bounded into the ring. Consternation was depicted on many a face. "Hold hard, gentlemen," I shouted, "he can't hurt you; hold tight together one minute, and I will hamper him." It would not do, the ring was broken in a trice. Threes about, right and left wheel being performed at the shortest possible notice, and in double quick time. I could not forbear a — as our deer bounded away into the forest. We were just laying the hounds on again when an order arrived from head quarters to stop our detachment, Mr. Davis having been more fortunate in securing the deer he had followed. Thus ended my first stag-hunt.

LETTER XXVIII.

As THE season of the year arrives when the young hounds are returned from their walks to the kennel, I would remind masters of hounds of the necessity of a more rational treatment than generally prevails with regard to these young hopes of the pack. Having before alluded to this subject in some of my former letters, and treated generally of the distemper, which often makes such fearful ravages among young hounds when first brought into the kennel, I shall only here remark, that air and exercise are not only the most necessary to keep them in health, but will be found the most certain means to prevent this scourge of the canine race assuming that malignant character which it often does. The very fact of shutting up a lot of young hounds together within four walls for weeks together, which have been accustomed up to that period to the free exercise of lungs and limbs in the open air, must strike any one, who for even ten minutes considers the subject, as being not only absurd, but cruel. That it has been the custom for many years, and is so still in very many hunting establishments, is no argument in its favour, but proves only that the master gives himself little concern about the matter, and leaves it to his huntsman. Can we be surprised, then, with so little attention on his part to the proper treatment of his

young hounds, to hear of the many and serious losses which result from the distemper, which is actually invoked by this culpable and negligent mode of treatment? I shall be told, that the hunting season not being ended, the huntsman and feeder are too much occupied to have any spare time to exercise the young hounds, and therefore, they must do, as others have done before—take their chance. So, of course, they must, if such is your excuse, and you will run the risk of losing several of, perhaps, your best young hounds, merely to suit your huntsman's fancy, or because you do not think it worth your while to adopt any remedial measures. The cost of employing two extra hands for the first month—and that would be the only one necessary—would amount to the large sum of four pounds sterling, supposing that two men were employed at 10s per week, merely to walk with the young hounds for two or three hours a day, the feeder, of course, going with them. By this plan they would not only be kept in health, but be ready to go out of couples by the time the hunting season was over, and Jack's services would not be required to break them from running those little flighty animals, some with short and some with long tails, abounding in most villages, and which Mr. Slowman used to designate by the opprobrious epithet of *car dogs*.

There is a vast deal of stuff and nonsense talked by huntsmen in breaking-in young hounds. The fact is, but for the absurd custom of shutting them up away from the sight of every other living animal but themselves for at least a month or two after they come in from their walks, they would require no breaking at all, except from hare or deer. From *puppyhood* they have

been accustomed to sheep and cur dogs, without exhibiting any great desire to kill and eat either the one or the other, certainly not the latter, I should say, from choice.

To prove how far air and exercise will go to ameliorate the effects of distemper, I will merely say, that I tried the experiment with three young hounds, which were seized with the usual symptoms a short time since. They caught the distemper from another dog, not belonging to me, which died in convulsions. Being satisfied in my own mind of the necessity of air and exercise, as most efficient assistants in reducing the virulence of this disease, I tried what these would do alone, without giving any medicine at all, not even an emetic or spoonful of salt and water. These three puppies, not quite ten months old, were attacked with the usual symptoms—a dry husky cough, with discharge from the nose. I fed them twice a day; for breakfast a little warm skim milk, with barley meal, scalded, which they had about eight o'clock. At ten o'clock I took them out walking over some fresh ploughed fallows, and then home through pasture fields, to have a good run, if they felt inclined. They had another hour's exercise about four o'clock, and were fed again at six in the evening. I pursued this plan of walking them over the fresh-ploughed land twice a day, sometimes behind the plough. The running at the nose ceased in three or four days, and in ten, from the time they were first attacked, they were as well as if they had never had the distemper at all. Having stated this fact, to prove what air and exercise can effect, I leave it with masters of hounds for their consideration.

At the request of a friend, who wished me to give him some information on hare-hunting as well as fox-hunting, I purpose making a short digression to answer his enquiries upon this subject, as far as I feel competent to do so; but I must premise that, although I served an apprenticeship to thistle-whipping under the best master of harriers in his day, I never was a genuine hare-hunter at heart; but—*de gustibus non disputandum*—every man has his own peculiar hobby, and, at any rate, hare-hunting ranks a long way before calf-hunting; one is sport in its legitimate sense, the other is not. Beckford remarks, that if you make a serious business of hare-hunting, you spoil it. The same observation may hold good with regard to fox-hunting, or any other hunting. To make a serious business of what is intended only as a recreation or amusement, defeats its primary object. To affirm that every man who goes out hunting has no other end in view but a day's pleasurable amusement, would be not exactly correct. Some go for one reason, some for another, and some for no reason at all, except to kill time; but a real sportsman goes out to enjoy himself. The prospect of a day's hunting puts him in high and buoyant spirits, and, when mounted on his hunter, he leaves dull care behind him, not sitting behind his saddle, as it is said—*atra cura sedit post equitem*—but sitting in any other position dull care may fancy, in a ditch by the road side, or, perhaps, at home in his arm chair.

On a fine hunting morning we feel above all the cares and troubles of life, and not only in charity, but in good humour with everyone and everything around us; in short, hunting is anything and everything but a serious business to the real lover of the sport. Fox-hunting and

hare-hunting, however, are in their essential properties about as wide asunder as the two poles. Turning a hare up in view before a lot of high bred foxhounds of about 22 inches in height, is not hare-hunting, although I have known some who considered it a high merit to ride a hare to death in this fashion. A real pack of harriers must set about their business in a very different manner to this. Avoid giving them a view of the hare when found if possible; it only makes them wild. Harriers must depend entirely on their noses to be worth anything as harriers. It has been said that a well bred foxhound has a nose superior to every other hound; perhaps he has, but I am not quite clear that I should select thorough bred foxhounds to hunt hares with, were I to commence a pack of harriers.

In the pack to which I have just alluded, we had three different kinds of hounds. The old southern, the true foxhound, and a cross between these two. The latter, in my opinion, were the best harriers. We had one bitch in particular, called Artful, of this cross, which was the best harrier I ever saw in my life, quick with a scent, and always running hard at the head of the pack. The foxhounds had too much dash for the short turnings of their game, although when any straight running took place they were foremost in the fray. Speed is not so much a requisite in hare-hunting as in fox-hunting; and for this diversion hounds, in my opinion, may run too fast.

Hares are to be found in some localities, such as a wild open country, on down and moors, which will run tolerably straight; but, generally speaking, they describe a circle, returning to the place where they were found. In the spring months jack hares, which are out visiting,

will run straight home ; and these afford the best chases. Were I to become a hare-hunter, I would set about forming my pack from the old blue mottled southern hound and the foxhound, which I should consider the best cross to make thorough good harriers. Twenty couples are quite sufficient to form a pack of harriers, fourteen or sixteen couples being the outside number which should be taken into the field. These are enough for all hunting purposes, and will make a good cry ; more are, I think, a useless encumbrance, and will tend rather to defeat than ensure good sport.

Little is required for a huntsman to a pack of harriers. He cannot be too quiet, and there is little opportunity, as in fox-hunting, for the display of great talents. In fox-hunting, to hear that your fox is a quarter of an hour before you is no very pleasing intelligence, when you know that he is still travelling on, and the time lost cannot be regained ; but in hare-hunting this is not of any very great consequence, as the hare generally stops to listen when the hounds are far behind her, and after doubling a few times will throw herself down and wait until she is fresh found again. The season of the year and weather are the best guides to the form of a hare. When wet and stormy, hares seek low situations, protected from the wind, where there is some dry bank or rough long grass. In dry weather they are commonly found on old fallows, or in high situations. In enclosed countries they generally sit near to the hedge or fence, and not often in the middle of the field. Unless much disturbed they lie very close in their forms during the greater part of the year, until the months of February and March, when they become wild, and get up at long distances.

It is not very easy to find hares sitting on rough fallows, which should be regularly crossed, directing the eye up the ridge, near which they generally sit. The trail of a hare lasts much longer than the drag of a fox, and those who go out rather early will have much pleasure in seeing their hounds work up to her sitting. It is certainly a very exhilarating scene, which I have often witnessed in my younger days—the chorus increasing as the hounds approach nearer their game, and then the full cry as she breaks away in view. Upon such occasions I could not forbear a screech or two, and although much noise is not allowed in hare-hunting, yet, when in view, a few screams are, I think, pardonable. Although, when fresh found, hares run tolerably straight, yet no sooner are the hounds out of sight, than they have recourse to those numerous devices which in some countries have obtained for the most cunning the characters of witches.

In my situation as head whipper-in to my father's harriers, I often took great liberties, and got forward contrary to orders sometimes, to see how any old hares which had beaten us before managed these matters. I have seen them run up a fallow nearly the whole length of a field, then quickly retrace their steps to the point at which they entered, and then spring off at right angles, making three or four surprising leaps. They would also, in their circles, hunt the hounds, double through hedges, running a short distance into the field and then returning, running up one side of a hedge, and then going down the other. In stone wall countries they will run on the top of the wall for some distance; in short, their shifts are often a puzzle to the best pack of

hounds, with a very knowing hand to help them into the bargain.

In hare-hunting a forward cast is the least likely to succeed, and unless upon great emergencies, harriers should not be cast at all. The more they are left to themselves the better able will they be to work through their difficulties, and a hare-hunter has no business to be in a hurry; he may sit quietly on his horse, and watch his hounds puzzling out the scent, the probability being, that the hare is only in the next field. A good pack of harriers will keep forward as long as there is a scent before them; if sheep or cattle have foiled the ground, they may be held on to the next fence, but they should be left as much as possible to their own noses. Lifting them renders them wild, and if often assisted, they will not care about puzzling out the scent. Any clever lad will do as whipper-in to a pack of harriers, as he will have only to attend to the huntsman's orders in stopping or turning the hounds, as may be required.

To make a pack of harriers run well together, which is their great beauty, you must draft from head and tail, keep none that are faster than the others, or that get forward without a scent. They should all act and move in a body like a troop of cavalry—no old bellman must be kept pottering on the scent, or heel runners. This trick harriers are very much disposed to; it is a bad fault, and where Jack's whip is necessary. When harriers run back the same line they have gone over before, it is not, however, *always a proof* that they are running heel. Hares practice this manœuvre more than any other, and therefore your hounds may be right; at any rate have a little patience, and you will soon see whether they are

right or wrong. If they run back only a certain distance, and then break off right or left, they have only followed their game, and are entitled to praise instead of rebuke.

A good cry is half the fun with your currant jelly dogs. Formerly, we are told, some hare-hunters were as particular as to the melody of their hounds as to their hunting qualities. Noisy, chattering hounds—or, as they are more frequently called, babblers—should be drafted, for, like long-winded orators, their opinions so loudly expressed are *vox et preterea nihil*. I have seen harriers of all sizes, from the small beagle of 14 or 16 inches to the foxhound of 22 inches. I should select the medium, from 20 to 21 in height. It is much more easy to obtain hounds of this standard, and you may always breed sufficient to keep them up afterwards. With a pack of twenty couples, you need not put forward more than six or seven couples of young hounds, which will allow for five, at least, standing good through the season.

There is great art and science necessary to breed hounds effectually. Those who breed largely will have the best selection as to appearances; but those who have only a limited number of bitches must be particular in mating them. The late Mr. Ward was the cleverest man in this respect that I ever met with. He never would breed from any bitches which were not quite perfect in all their performances, and not until two or three seasons had passed over their heads. His brood bitches, therefore, were few in number; but they generally produced such as he could depend upon. His unentered draft of young hounds was a very scanty one, as I know from experience, but they were sure to turn out well. His old huntsman assured me he often considered a day

and night before he decided upon the sire best suited to answer his purpose ; but his judgment seldom failed.

Bad hounds eat the same quantity of food as good ones, and as my ambition always has been to have the best animals of their kind, so would I have a good and clever pack of harriers, if I thought it worth while to keep them at all. For this purpose I should get together some young unentered foxhounds and a few of the old blue mottled southernns, and then model a pack to my fancy.

As soon as the corn is harvested hare-hunting may commence, but sport of course cannot be expected thus early. As in the cub-hunting season, this is the time to break in and blood the young hounds, and if the country is an enclosed one, and hares tolerably plentiful, you will soon catch hares enough for this purpose, and some to spare. Harriers to be good must be kept in good heart and blood, and all the hares they kill in a day must not be reserved for currant jelly sauce at home. When hares are chopped by them, these may be taken away ; but when they have earned their game by a good run it should never be taken from them, or your hounds will soon become slack and indifferent in their work. Our old pack were expert carvers, in which they were duly encouraged by their master, and it required a pretty quick hand to get a hare out of their clutches. This, as first whipper-in, I never troubled my head about, unless upon some very particular occasion, when a lady had expressed a wish for a hunted one. The farmers who joined us always had the hare, if they could save her, and it was great fun to me to see how they would puff and blow away, and cram their horses at desperate places, when

the hounds were running into their game; but if old Workman (a large blue mottled hound, with a mouth as wide as an alligator) once caught hold of poor puss, the currant jelly was saved for that dressing at least.

Views should be avoided as much as possible, but in drawing for your game over open ground, or in beating hedge-rows, they will occur. It is advisable in beating hedges to get them tried by some man on foot or horse-back before the hounds; there is not much risk then of a hare being chopped, and you can lay the hounds on quietly when she is out of sight. A pack of harriers, to deserve the name, should be kept strictly to their own game. Neither should they be allowed to hunt either fox, red deer, or red herring—they then become a lot of curs, and are fit for nothing. Although often longing for a gallop in my younger days after Mr. Reynolds, the governor was inexorable on this point, and never would admit of the least deviation from our legitimate drama.

Upon one occasion we had, during the vacation, got a fox sent down from Oxford as a treat, and had calculated upon turning him down at the end of a small covert, hallooing the hounds away and giving the governor the slip; but our plans were most unpleasantly defeated, by the unfortunate fox being stifled in the bag before his arrival. As misfortunes seldom come singly, it so happened that we were from home the day this fox was brought, and the man fell in with my father, who soon discovered the truth, but said nothing about it until after dinner, when he remarked, "I think you young gentlemen expected a present to-day from Oxford." It was no use denying it, for we saw the mischief in his eye. Ringing the bell, he desired the footman to bring in the

bag which had arrived, and to our horror Thomas soon made his appearance with the bag in question, out of which he drew one of the finest greyhound foxes I had ever seen, dead and stiff.

“Well, my boys,” said the governor, “you intended to play me a trick, but the tables are turned, and I have only to impress upon your minds, that if ever you attempt to make the hounds run after a fox, they will then become a lot of curs, and, as such, I will not keep them another week.” Although there were no foxhounds in our country, my father never would allow his hounds to change from their own legitimate game, and after-experience has taught me that he was perfectly right.

LETTER XXIX.

HARE-HUNTING has some advantages over fox-hunting. The expenses attending it are trifling; you can select days best suited to sport without giving offence, or causing inconvenience to others. If the day you have appointed turns out boisterous, you can go out the next. There is no earth-stopping to be done, therefore one day will do as well as another. Harriers also, cannot be worked too much in reason. You can select also your own hour, and make your amusement subservient to other engagements or avocations. For these reasons I should prefer keeping harriers to foxhounds, as so many inconveniences and responsibilities are attached to the latter in the present day.

The constant changes which are taking place annually, almost, in fox-hunting establishments, prove that the system is carried out too far; and as the resources of country gentlemen are now so much reduced, my firm impression is, that fox-hunting must be brought down to its proper level, and conducted upon a much more economical footing to suit these free trade times. No doubt, in the best countries, where there is no lack of friends and supporters, the thing will be carried on as usual, and, also, where there is a rich man at the head of the establishment, who is a thorough sportsman. But in

many of the provincial countries, where the establishment is dependent upon subscriptions raised by the neighbouring gentry, the fifties and five-and-twenties must dwindle down to half that amount; and there is a good cause for it, when landlords are called upon to lower their rents ten, twenty, and thirty per cent.

We are told by Free Traders that everything is cheaper. It may be to the fundholder and money maker, but the landlord and farmer still pay dearer than ever. He buys his cloth cheaper, but he loses in the price of wool. Cheap bread is no very great advantage, when he loses ten shillings on his sack of wheat, and so on in proportion. He may buy, it is true, a smart-looking silk hat for 12s. or 14s., where he used to give 25s. for a beaver; but there is no economy in this, as one good beaver would wear out half a dozen of these flimsy concerns. So, to meet the times, fewer servants must be kept, a less number of horses, and, if they cannot let their land, the squires must farm themselves, make their own bread and cheese, kill their own mutton, substitute strong beer after dinner for port wine, and cherry brandy for maraschino. Those who can club together to have a little amusement in the dead months must keep a few couples of hounds each, the pack being assembled on hunting mornings by sound of horn, as in the olden time, and the old earthstopper on his pony re-established to do the work of the hunt. To this pass that things will soon come in the corn-growing districts is my humble opinion. I hope I may be deceived.

Harriers, perhaps, will then be more in the ascendant, as the Game-laws will go next, and hares become just plentiful enough for this pastime only. Foxhounds are

all the rage in the present day, and thistle-whippers, as they are facetiously called, scarcely dare show their names in print. There are some few, however, who have still the hardihood to parade their little dogs before the public in the columns of *Bell's Life*, and at the head of the list stands the worthy master of the B.V.H., who, taking him all in all, may be considered as the Meynell of his day in the harrier line. Mr. Yeatman certainly stands confessed as the leading and most brilliant star in his profession, and by all accounts, his pack must be quite perfection. They are, I am told, all thorough bred foxhounds, standing from 20 to 21 inches in height, with good legs and feet; and, if we are to judge by the runs we sometimes see recorded in *Bell's Life*, they are as clever in their performances as they are in their appearance. I still must think, however, that thorough-bred foxhounds are more than a match for the timid hare; and I should prefer the cross I have named above, not because they have better noses, but because they have less speed and are less flighty.

Foxhounds always require to be kept above their work; but that is not the case with harriers—the more work they have the better they will be. If fed on good old oatmeal, and well treated, they will hunt three days a week. There is seldom a complaint in any country of having too many foxes; they are easily dispersed; but too many hares are almost fatal to sport with harriers. They will not disperse and shift their quarters like foxes; and you will be running and changing all day long, until the hounds are disgusted. I have seen greyhounds so over-coursed and bewildered with many hares that they came to a stand, and would not attempt to race after

another hare ; and this, I think, would be the case with a pack of harriers, where game was too plentiful. To run two or three good hares down in a day is sufficient entertainment for man, horse, and hound, particularly as we are not to make a serious business of it.

In these days, good hare-hunting countries are become scarce ; the *battue* men repudiate them on one side, and the numerous packs of foxhounds snub them on the other ; so that our poor friends, the thistle-whippers, have a very poor chance for their amusement. There is certainly a prejudice against harriers, and I think a very unfounded and unjust one. Where they are well conducted, with a real gentleman sportsman as their owner, they cannot materially, if at all, interfere with either fox-hunting or game-preserving ; but it must be admitted that a pack of curs, with anything but a gentleman at their head, is a perfect nuisance in any country hunted by foxhounds. When I kept foxhounds there were two packs of harriers in my country ; but their owners were gentlemen, and became particular friends of my own, and they never in any way interfered with our sport. But there was also, at the extreme point of our country, a scratch pack of curs, with a cur manager as well, which were my abomination. They were perpetually at some underhand work, running into my fox coverts on purpose ; that is, pretending to run a hare there, and then finding a fox ; buying up foxes to turn out on the sly, and disturbing the country the day before the foxhounds were appointed to meet there. Such tricks as these give rise to and perpetuate the dislike which is often found to prevail with masters of foxhounds against harriers. But where each man legitimately follows his own calling,

these prejudices should not exist. There is plenty of room in this land of liberty for every man to follow his own pursuits, without infringing upon the rights of another.

Fox-hunting is all very well in its way, so is hare-hunting, so also is game-preserving; neither is there any reason or just cause why fox-hunters, hare-hunters, and game-preservers should not co-exist in the same country, and be upon the best terms, as neighbours ought to be. Our friends of the trigger must not suppose that fox-hunters wish by any means to interfere with their just prerogative in preserving game; they are, I hope, too liberal-minded to be either envious or jealous of others amusing themselves as they may think proper after another fashion. All they ask is, that as they have no wish to interrupt their sport, so game-preservers will act in the same spirit of forbearance towards them, and not interfere with their amusement by allowing their keepers to kill *their game*. Surely this is no very great favour after all, and if one fox can afford so much amusement to more than a hundred of his neighbours, the illiberality of any game-preserver who destroys foxes cannot be very questionable.

A double-barrel was fired in *Bell's Life* a short time since at *illiberal fox-hunters* and *whining farmers* by a random *shot*, who fancies, perhaps, he has peppered us a little, and if we don't like it we are to be treated to a bite of the steel traps to settle us—that is, if we are *nasty*; but our friend of the trigger is, I dare say, a very nice young man, who possibly may keep tame rabbits, as well as tame pheasants, and amuse himself in various other innocent recreations. I think, however, he has

gone a little wide of the mark, in endeavouring to tax fox-hunters with *illiberality* and *nastiness*. These gentle appellations properly belong to fox-killing game-preservers, and to them only. We plead *not guilty* to this soft impeachment. The very spirit of fox-hunting is antagonistic to illiberality. We follow a pursuit in which all alike may join without let or hindrance, and the more amusement we can afford to the many, or the million, if you like it, the greater our gratification. Selfishness forms no part of our profession. A master of foxhounds does not say, "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*," but welcome all alike, from the peer to the peasant. He does not ask game-preservers to spare foxes for his *own* gratification, but for the amusement of the country generally.

A master of foxhounds is a public servant, and as such it is incumbent upon him to conciliate, as much as possible, those with whom conciliation will avail; but it is no proof of illiberality on his part, if, after fair remonstrances have failed, he is obliged to denounce some who are selfishly endeavouring to mar the very object it is his business constantly to keep in view—the sport of the community at large. All large game-preservers are not necessarily fox destroyers; but, on the contrary, many of them are our best friends and supporters, and we are neither unmindful of, nor ungrateful for, their generous assistance to our cause. To this fact the experience of every master of hounds in every country will bear testimony.

In my own country, when I kept foxhounds, one of our very best friends was a large game-preserver. He was no fox-hunter himself, seldom mounting a horse; but

he was a strict preserver of foxes, and I will say no man was more generally respected throughout the whole country. He not only patronized the hounds, but one of our fixtures, and the most popular of all, was on the lawn in front of his house. To this place of meeting men from other hunts would flock with alacrity, in well-founded expectation of a good fox and a good day's sport. His house was open on these occasions to all of our *illiberal* cloth, and a glass of jumping powder freely offered to those who liked to avail themselves of his hospitality. Were we fox-hunters insensible to such acts of kindness and liberality, or did they not call forth corresponding feelings on our part? I will venture to say there was not one true-hearted fox-hunter among us all, including the *whining* farmers as well, who would not have gone through fire and water to serve this gentleman or any of his family.

There were no large woodlands here to draw; the coverts were all small—in fact, mere spinies. Upon the lawn might be seen from two to three hundred pheasants called together in the morning by the keeper to be fed, and upon that lawn, with all these pheasants and hares almost innumerable, have I found a litter of cubs, and hunted them on foot among the laurels. In one season I found eight foxes in this gentleman's preserves, and killed seven of them, all with good runs. I state these facts to prove that foxes and game can exist together, and that we fox-hunters are not illiberal or foolish enough to abuse all game-preservers in a mass, many of whom we acknowledge to be not only our best, but most disinterested friends.

Let all lovers of the trigger imitate the worthy ex-

ample of the Squire of C——n. I have not selected him as a solitary instance of joint game and fox preserving in the whole of our country, there were many others who followed his example, but they were proprietors of fox coverts, which this gentleman was not—he had no such thing as a *real fox covert* upon the whole of his property. The places we found foxes in were small plantations of fir and alder of about three or four acres, none exceeding ten, and I should not have had any just cause of complaint had I drawn such places, season after season, without finding a fox. Masters of hounds know tolerably well where they ought to find foxes—in coverts natural to them, and where from time immemorial they have been known always to resort; but when we find them in small spinies such as these were, we feel a double obligation to men, who thus go out of their way to cater for the public amusement. This gentleman turned down young foxes in these places (when there were none bred on the spot) among all his host of hares and pheasants, and made his keepers feed them with rabbits. We honour and respect men of such public spirited feelings as these, to whom all honour is due.

But why are we to spare game-preservers of a different class, who spare neither us nor our foxes? We will not admit that *foxes are fed by the game-preserver, and him only*. We know that a stray hare or wounded pheasant may occasionally be purloined from a great man's preserves by Mr. Reynolds, and small blame to him for so doing; but we know also that a fox feeds upon rabbits, mice, beetles, and other such small fry, and that he does sometimes pay a visit to a farm-yard if it lies in his beat, and carry away a fowl from a poor *whining farmer*, who,

after all, does not make half so much fuss about a couple or two of chickens as his wealthy landlord does about a paltry cock pheasant.

There may possibly be a question whether pheasants ought to be considered as *feræ naturæ*. In the manner they are now reared and preserved my opinion is that they are not; but there can be no question as to a fox being an animal *feræ naturæ*. He is here to-day and gone to-morrow. We may find him in a game preserve it is true, but as he will run eight or ten miles straight away into another locality, it would puzzle even the Poor-law Commissioners to assign him his proper place of settlement; and I think a game-preserved has made an equally wide shot in asserting that a fox is supplied from his *victualling department alone*.

Some game-preservers appear to me to be labouring under an attack of *foxophobia*, which has infected their whole system, and look upon Mr. Wiley as a rampant and roaring lion, walking about their preserves from morning till night, with his mouth wide open seeking how many pheasants and hares he can devour; or perhaps they recollect a certain funny little picture which excited their particular attention when children, in which a fox is represented as sitting under a tree with his mouth open, expecting a cock which is perched on the top, to fall into it as a matter of course. They should have seen also the answer put into the mouth of this said cock by a wag to this polite invitation to fall into the fox's open jaws and be eaten—" *I wish you may get it.*" Pheasants are at roost when foxes begin their evening rambles, and few would suppose a fox such an ass as to sit under a tree half the night with his mouth

wide open in the vague expectation of a pheasant dropping into it.

A letter has been forwarded to me, signed "An Old Foxhunter," part of which I will transcribe, although it may be calculated to draw forth another *shot* from Mr. Ramrod:—

"I have at this moment in my eye a keeper of this description, a fellow who sometimes shows a litter of cubs the first time the hounds draw his coverts, but after that, if hounds run into them, or draw them unexpectedly, there is no more symptoms of a fox than if the animal had never existed. Let the fixture be somewhere for the express purpose of drawing this man's coverts, and there is scarcely a more sure find within the precincts of the hunt; no danger of changing foxes, however—no second fox. Now, really, as a matter of curiosity, I shall be greatly obliged if 'Scrutator' will do me the favour to enlighten me as to this fellow's plan of operations. We don't hear of his importing foxes by the rail; in the old coaching days (for I have known him long) he did not have them down by those conveyances. Does he borrow a fox of his neighbour? does he drag them to his coverts? if he did we should sometimes find a brace of foxes on his ground. Does he bottle, or rather barn his foxes, like a good housekeeper, 'for use when wanted?' In fact, what does he do?"

The trick practised by this old artful keeper is a stale one to me, as I have often known it adopted by these velveteen gentry. From the facts above stated, there can be very little doubt that this man is a regular fox destroyer, and the more dangerous because he is apparently a fox preserver. He attempts to disarm suspicion,

and with the majority of men who go out hunting, his plan succeeds. A master of hounds is almost puzzled how to deal with him, although he may be satisfied in his own mind of his malpractices. You cannot assert that he kills foxes, without proof positive; you may hint your suspicions to the master or the man, but you are met, *in limine*, with the retort courteous, "What just cause of complaint have you? whenever the coverts are drawn there is a fox." There is your answer. You have, in fact, nothing to say. Your only plan is to be quiet, watch him carefully, and you will catch him out.

From the description given of this man's coverts, and the fact of there being a litter of cubs occasionally bred there, I should suppose them to be a natural resort of foxes, and such being the case, he has no occasion to employ railroads or stage coaches to convey them to his locality. They come there without having their passage paid, willingly and uninvited, perhaps, although we are aware of certain drugs, by which foxes may be drawn to a certain spot, even from long distances. This dodge possibly may be practised in this instance, although it strikes me as an unnecessary one. The country around being regularly hunted by hounds, foxes will resort to this man's coverts for quietude, if not attracted there by game, and few have an idea of the number of foxes disposed of in one season by an old and skilful keeper so situated. There are many ways of catching foxes without injuring them; and if there is in addition a head of earths on the ground, here is a live trap at once ready made to his hand. I should not be surprised if this man destroys from ten to fifteen brace of foxes in a season. He will keep one always in reserve for the hounds

against their drawing his coverts, selecting the freshest and last caught or least injured. This fox will be carefully concealed in some out-of-the-way place, and let loose the same morning the hounds are expected. This being done, the keeper puts on a bold face, and goes to meet the hounds, in apparently the most cordial manner. If asked about foxes, he will demurely say, "I think you will find, Sir, in our coverts this morning;" or he may complain, as some do, "of being eaten up with foxes."

The huntsman and hounds are the most likely to find out this old gentleman in his tricks. Let the former carefully observe the *behaviour of his old hounds*, when the fox is *found*, and also when he is *killed*; for they will tell him to a certainty whether the fox has been *handled* or not. Let the pads also, the brush and neck, be well examined before he is given to the hounds. The fox being turned down perhaps two or three hours before the hounds arrive, will have had time to roll himself, and become tolerably fresh and sweet, so that he may deceive *all* except the *old hounds*, master, huntsman, whips, and the whole field. Upon these occasions the *keeper* or his *assistants* will be the first, perhaps, to halloo the fox. They sometimes overshoot the mark in their eagerness. I suspect a fox *found* by a keeper, and *not by the hounds*, having been played these tricks myself, but I always found them out.

I was once drawing a ticklish place of this sort, where I knew foxes were trapped regularly, when in the middle of a large covert, the keeper began halloaing and screaming in a bye drive. We were down with him in a twinkling. "Well," I said, "what's all that clatter

about?" "Fox just crossed over the ride, Sir, where you are standing." The hounds were on the spot, but they would not own the scent; the *old ones* looked up instead of putting their noses down. "Very odd," said the man, "the hounds won't hunt the fox, when I seed him only a few minutes ago in that very place." "My hounds," I replied "tell me that the fox you just now saw came out of your pocket, or a bag which is now hid under a stoul in that high wood, and I believe them; no tricks upon travellers will do with us."

The man bundled off as soon as he could. The fox was again halloaed over another drive, where several horsemen were stationed with the master of the coverts himself; still the hounds would not *settle to the scent*. I at once blew my horn, and took the hounds away. An old sportsman rode directly up, and asked what I was going to do. "Do," I replied, "my hounds don't hunt bagmen. I shall draw elsewhere for a wild fox." This announcement created, as may be supposed, quite a sensation; but turning a deaf ear to remonstrances and entreaties alike, I left the coverts directly. I, of course, got a tolerable sprinkling of abuse, which I cared about as little for as a duck for cold water. But I had one good staunch fox-hunting friend, who took my part behind my back. He said aloud for all to hear, "He is quite right; I applaud him for his firmness. It was an insult to a master of foxhounds to turn a *bagman* down before his hounds." I was never again treated to a bagman in those coverts, but we always found *wild foxes* there afterwards—not a fox only.

LETTER XXX.

I REMEMBER a bagman being exposed to view by an old fox-hunter (who was up to a dodge or two) in a very adroit manner. Upon the outskirts of a fox-hunting country there lived, and, for aught I know to the contrary, lives there still, the master of a scratch pack of harriers. He was neither a farmer nor a cattle-dealer, nor a pork butcher, but all these combined together, and a little knowledge of dog-stealing as well, constituted about as *recherche* a character as could well lay claim to the title of sportsman, which he had the assurance to call himself. His *locale* being within two miles of a large city, he was patronized by many dashing blades, of rather equivocal pretensions to the name of gentlemen, and certain professionals of low standing, who, by subscribing a few pounds to support this scratch concern, passed off as hawks among these small birds, when they would not have obtained any notice at all with the foxhounds. To cater for his patrons' amusement, this worthy master used to obtain foxes from the country of the foxhounds, which he turned down upon the sly in some outlying place, pretending of course that he could not ride up to stop his hounds (which was true enough) from running fox. This excuse was always ready when he thought himself likely to get into hot

water with any genuine fox-hunter. As, however, there were some outside spinies, not regular fox coverts, to which foxhounds seldom or ever went, his occasionally finding and running a fox was thought little of for some time. It was only when the thing became rather more common, and a run or two was put into print, that the suspicions of the master of the foxhounds and some of his field were excited, that there were more outlying foxes found by this marauder, than the small district he laid claim to was likely to afford.

It was known in well-informed circles that this hare-hunting professor was not in the habit of making any wide distinction between *meum* and *tuum*, and a pretty strong hint was given him that if such practices were continued, the limits of his country would be curtailed. The hint had the effect only of making him more cautious, by shifting his scene of action out of the precincts of the foxhounds.

An old fox-hunter being resolved to catch him out and convict him of hunting bag foxes, found out his next place of meeting, when they expected to have a day's sport, which was always to be known at a certain sadler's shop in the gay city, and joined the cry. His appearance, however, was not particularly agreeable to the conspirators, but things were conducted so snug, that they fancied he would be outwitted. After pretending to draw for a hare over some fallows, and up a hedge row or two, they trotted off to a small covert, from which the hounds went away almost as soon as thrown in, on the other side. "Stole away," cried the professor at the top of his cracked voice; but our old fox-hunter was soon with them, and kept his place in the foremost rank,

notwithstanding the exertions of a self-styled captain, who considered himself the leader of the concern. The straight course pursued by the animal before them, soon led him to surmise there was something more than a jack hare before the hounds, which opinion he openly expressed. "Oh, very likely," said the captain. Perhaps it is a fox—there are some wild outlying ones in these parts." "And," rejoined the old fox-hunter, "I have a notion there are a few bagmen as well; and that this is one I have very little doubt." "We don't do those things, I assure you," said the other. "Then your neighbours belie you; but we shall soon see."

In about fifty minutes the fox was run into and killed, when our old fox-hunter jumped off his horse, and appropriated the brush to himself, which having carefully examined, he held in his hand, until all the field came up. Last of all, the worthy master made his appearance, puffing and blowing like a grampus. "Well, gentlemen," he said, "we have had a capital run; but who would have thought of finding a fox in that little place?" "Not you, I'll be sworn," exclaimed the old fox-hunter, with a sly look, "if you had not put him there first." "I put him there, Sir? I know nothing about him." "Well, then, you persist in saying that this is a wild fox, do you?" "In course I do," replied the master. "Then I'll prove that to be false, any way," said the old fox-hunter; "here is the proof"—so blowing back the fur on the brush, he drew forth certain bits of oat chaff, which had worked their way down to and adhered to the dock—these he displayed to the discomfited professor and his wondering field. There were no more assertions made in contradiction to this damn-

ing proof. Our old fox-hunter coolly remarking, that "wild foxes did not make their kennels in *corn bins*," rode off with his brush. This was a very neat way of discovering a bagman, and a hint worth attending to; but as all bag foxes may not be put either into corn-bins or corn-sacks, these proofs may sometimes be wanting.

There are, however, many other signs which are known to old fox-hunters. They generally run down wind, but, being ignorant of their country, have no point to make, and appear to loiter before the hounds. The scent also is too good—the hounds running wild at it. I am alluding now to bag foxes when turned down before harriers, for I am quite sure, that any good pack of fox-hounds would not run a bag fox at all, unless halloed on and encouraged; and then, even they would not enjoy the scent, which is so different from that of a wild fox.

I heard once of an old fox which had been caught and hunted three times in one season by a pack of harriers, and found his way home each time, having been turned loose thirty miles from the earth where he was taken. This was in "days of auld lang syne," when the fine greyhound fox was the prevailing one in this country. We are very particular in these times, to have horses and hounds both of the best blood, and in first-rate condition, but not the slightest attention is paid to the breed of foxes, which is of rather more importance than at first sight may appear. To show sport the breed of foxes should not be overlooked so much as is generally the case, for without good foxes you cannot have good runs. The large importations of French foxes have in many hunting countries done a great deal of mischief.

This little red species is quite distinct in its habits and character from the old greyhound fox, and will never shew any sport at all until they are three or four years old. They seldom go far from home, and when found, either hang to the coverts or make short rings, running more like hares; neither have they the strength or power to stand long before a pack of hounds.

Many think a fox is a fox, and that every fox ought to run; but there is as much difference almost in the breed of foxes as in the breed of dogs; and I am quite satisfied that many countries with which I am acquainted require a cross in their foxes as much as they do in their hounds. It may be asked where these greyhound foxes are to be found. Without injuring or robbing any hunt, they may be procured from the Highlands of Scotland, where numbers are annually destroyed by the hill keepers; also from some parts of Wales, and some parts of Devonshire on the coast, where foxhounds are not kept. They may also be imported from Germany. When I first began keeping foxhounds, I obtained several young foxes of this species, and, by judicious management, they afforded excellent sport. They were turned into a head of earths in the best part of our country, four to an earth, and there fed regularly until the month of September, when they were old enough to shift for themselves. The earths were always left open when we drew the coverts in which they had been placed, as they were intended for stock, and it was not my purpose to kill one of these foxes during their first season. They were, however, of a very rambling disposition, and after Christmas, we found several of them many miles from their homes. Some were unavoidably killed, but the greater part were

saved by going to ground; and thus a foundation was laid, which lasted the many years I kept hounds, and perpetuated a good, hard-running race of foxes.

The second season these foxes afforded us extraordinary sport, for, being ear-marked, we knew them when brought to hand. For many seasons I continued to turn down two or three litters of these foxes, to add to the stock, treating them in the same manner as the first. I could have procured French, or the small species of red fox, at half the expense and trouble; but, except for the purpose of blooding hounds, I would have nothing to do with them. To prove how necessary it is to infuse fresh blood of the true sort, I may add, that since my relinquishing the country, few of this true breed now remain, having since been mixed with the red fox, and that is now the prevailing fox of the country. The true greyhound fox is of a light grey colour, bushy about the head, long in the body, and stands high upon his legs. The bulldog fox is the next in size—of a reddish grey, and common in most fox-hunting countries. These will afford good runs also; but the greyhound breed is far superior to them in every respect.

On one occasion I met with a large dark coloured fox, with a yellow breast, instead of white, at the extreme point of our country, which ran about eighteen miles, but not straight. We found him on a bad scenting day, with a hot sun and keen wind, in the month of February; running was out of the question, but we held on to him for about six miles into a large covert in the centre of our country, where we got upon better terms, and after a turn or two round the big wood, he turned his head for home again, which he nearly reached, when

being headed he retraced his steps, making again for the large covert, which he was destined never to reach; for waiting in a small brake we got up with him, and he was pulled down within one field of the large wood, myself, hounds, and fox jumping the last fence together, over which we tumbled in company, a large stake having run up between my horse's shoulder and ribs, which had nearly proved fatal to him. By the application of plenty of hot water, and by keeping the wound open with a long candle, no mischief resulted but the loss of his services in the field for a few weeks. The time occupied in hunting this fox, running being out of the question, was three hours and a half, through a woodland country, with two disagreeable brooks to cross twice, and but for his waiting for us two or three times we should scarcely have overhauled him at last; a straight running fox of the greyhound sort would have run us out of scent altogether in about forty minutes.

Every huntsman should take with him into the field a list of his pack for that day's hunting. This list should be entered also in a diary of each day's sport, with remarks about the hounds' work; it will be good authority to refer to at the end of the season, before the draft is made, and show the hounds which have done the most during the season, and have hunted the greatest number of days. A book of this description was always kept by me, in which these entries were made, and also remarks about the weather, the coverts which were drawn, the earths which were stopped, and the number of foxes found. This I found of great service at the end of the season, as it enabled me to see at once what was due to each earth stopper, and who were entitled to any extra reward.

It is the custom in some kennels to plunge the hounds into a warm bath after hunting, and to shut them up together when washed for a short time before they are fed. There are few who do not admit the efficacy of hot water, or who have not experienced the soothing effects of a warm bath after severe labour. To the human frame, with a good dry rubbing afterwards, nothing can be more refreshing, but without this dry rubbing we all know half the efficacy would be lost. By a sudden chill or cold blast the pores of the skin, thus opened by the application of the warm water, would be suddenly checked, and more harm than good would be the result of it; rubbing keeps up the action of the skin, and superinduces that glow over the whole frame which is so luxurious. Having tried the experiment with my own hounds for one entire season without any satisfactory result, I abandoned it. The warm bath is all very well, but the difficulty lies in having the hounds rubbed thoroughly dry afterwards, which requires much more labour and time than many suppose.

To have the thing done thoroughly well, I attended the operation myself, with three assistants, but it occupied more than an hour to bathe and rub tolerably dry about eighteen couples of hounds, and then they were not in my opinion half dry. It is true, they assisted each other in this respect, but I never could see yet any good result from one hound licking off the dirt and hair from another's coat. It was, however, one of the fashions of that day, and, not to be considered out of the fashion, I gave it a fair trial; but one season satisfied me that it could not be adopted as a general practice, without more injury than benefit to the hounds. Where there is a lodging-

room, heated with hot air, into which they may be turned after the bath, it may do very well; but subjecting them to the cold night air, in the depth of winter, in passing them through the courts into the greenyard, after coming out of a reeking hot bath, cannot, in my opinion, be otherwise than injurious.





